

BROTHER AND
~ SISTER ~

~ J. CHARRUAU, S. J. ~



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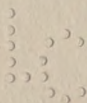
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Brother and Sister

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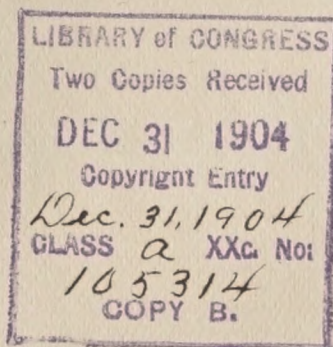
JEAN CHARRUAU, S. J.

Translated by
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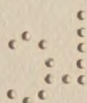


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BROTHER AND SISTER.¹

"I love to find once more beneath the ashes of old age the live coals of memory."

Now, in life's evening hour, having already crossed "the un pitying threshold of old age,"² I like to trace once more to its source the stream which is so soon to lose itself in the ocean of eternity; to find again in memory's treasure house the loved faces of those who have passed from this world before me, but whom the lapse of time can never cause me to forget. Sometimes there passes in the midst of these fair visions an evil shade which makes me shudder in spite of myself: it is the thought of those who have done me evil. Thanks be to God, I bear them no ill will, but forgive them with all my heart. It is only right that I should, since I myself have so much need of pardon.

For the last few years I have been transferring these reminiscences to paper at odd times as they have presented themselves. The scattered notes have been a consolation to me in the trials which it has pleased God to send me in my later years. The thought that these writings might be of service to others than myself never occurred to me, until some of my friends seriously urged me to publish them in the belief that they would be productive of good. At first I protested, but I ended by yielding, although they say the old never yield. Let these pages go forth, then, wherever the good Lord wills! Some may perhaps cause a smile, while others bring tears. Such is life! "Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy,"³ says Holy Writ.

So I have reduced to something like order these fagots which I hope my readers will receive with indulgence. If there are some tedious passages, they will not cause surprise. Is not old age proverbially fond of story-telling?

PAUL LECLÈRE.

La Hutterie, near Saint-Laurent-sur-Gemme, Anjou.

¹ The author desires to state that all the names of the persons referred to in these papers (except certain historic names) are entirely fictitious. The same remark applies to the little town of Saint-Laurent-sur-Gemme, an imaginary place which has nothing in common with the other Saint Laurents in Anjou.

² Homer's *Iliad*. Chapman, XXIV, line 487.

³ Prov. 14:13.

PART I.

EARLY YEARS.

CHAPTER I.

ORPHANS.

I WAS born at the Hutterie, in the parish of Saint-Laurent-sur-Gemme, in Anjou, on June 29, 1842. I received in Baptism the name of Paul, in honor of the great Apostle whose feast the Church celebrates on that day. I was the youngest of eight children, of whom only the two oldest, Charles and Marguerite, were still living at the time of my birth. My father and mother had the misfortune to lose two girls and three boys in infancy, but my dear parents, good Christians that they were, consoled themselves by the thought that they had given angels to heaven, and that these blessed little ones protected from on high their three remaining children.

My brother Charles, at that time seventeen years old, was pursuing his studies at the High School in Angers, and intended to enter the army. Marguerite, "Guitte" or "Guiguitte," as we generally called her, had just entered upon her thirteenth year, and was being taught by my mother, who did not wish to send her away from home.

My father, François Leclère, born at Vannes, in

1798, entered the army at the age of eighteen as a volunteer. He took part in the campaigns in Spain, Greece, and Algiers, and his brilliant services soon advanced him to the grade of captain, although he rose from the ranks. At that time, promotion was more rapid than it is at present. The day I was born, my father attained the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Full of faith and pious from his childhood up, he preserved throughout his youth his religious convictions in all their original intensity, and also the integrity of his conduct. He was a militant Catholic, and God did not allow this to hinder his advance in his profession, although in those days practical Catholics were regarded with marked suspicion by those in power.

Toward the end of the year 1824, my father, who had just been made lieutenant after the Spanish campaign, was in garrison at Angers. Introduced by the pastor of the cathedral, by whom he was held in high esteem, he was very kindly received by the Legrand family. They were people of middle station, but very well thought of by their associates and even by those of higher social rank. Monsieur and Madame Legrand had a daughter named Laurence, who had just left school and who was remarkable among the young girls of her age for her piety and sweet disposition.

My father, before long, realized that he was drawn toward Mlle. Laurence, and that a tender affection for her had taken root in his heart. He asked her

hand in marriage of her parents. They appreciated the upright character of the young officer, and did not hesitate to confide their daughter to his keeping; so in November, 1824, they were married.¹

The young people's start in life was more than modest, although my grandparents practised the strictest economy in order to provide a suitable establishment for their children. At her marriage my mother, relinquishing at the same time all further claim upon her parents' estate, received a small place of about a hundred acres called the Hutterie, situated in the department of Maine-et-Loire, a little more than eighteen miles from Angers. This was all the property her parents owned. They reserved for themselves only a small life income barely sufficient for their support. The Hutterie, rented out in two holdings, brought, on an average, some fifteen hundred francs a year. As for my father, his sole capital was his good health, his lieutenant's pay and the prospect of promotion. This was enough to begin with, but in case Kind Providence should send many children, there was, doubtless, hardship in store. Poor in this world's goods, but rich in confidence in God, my parents did not hesitate to decide the question, and entered joyously upon the pathway of the Christian life, resolving valiantly to accomplish their task and to keep the Cross well in sight. They kept their resolution.

¹ My maternal grandfather died the following year, 1825, and my grandmother survived him but two years, so that I never knew them.

During the first years of their married life, they lived in different garrison towns, in Nantes, Bordeaux, and Grenoble, but in the spring of 1840 my mother's health gave grave cause for alarm, and the physicians ordered a prolonged sojourn in the country. With this end in view, my father obtained another tour of duty at Angers, and the young wife took up her abode permanently at the Hutterie, where her husband joined her whenever his duties permitted.

The Hutterie is a large two-story house set in the midst of trees half-way up a lovely hillside at the foot of which babbles a little stream called the Gemme, whose waters, clear and limpid as the name indicates, flow on to lose themselves at last in the Loire a little below Saint-Florent.

Here we are in the war-like Vendée, the country of glorious memories, the scene of the "War of Giants."

The Hutterie is within the limits of Saint-Laurent-sur-Gemme, a parish of some eighteen hundred or two thousand souls, at that time in charge of an old friend of our family, Abbé Aubry, with his two assistants, Father Berteaux and Father Renaud.

Our house had none of the comforts or elegance of the modern villa. It was a plain, sensibly-arranged dwelling, large and airy and in excellent repair, all that could be desired for a family to whom Providence had given what was necessary, but nothing more.

My parents there lived a quiet and retired life, occupied wholly in cultivating their little domain and bringing up their children. Their only associates were the pastor of the parish; the family of Maitre Hardy, the notary at Saint-Laurent; the Ducoudrays (two old bachelors, very distant cousins of ours); Dr. Durand, and an aunt of my mother's, Mlle. Dumoulin, whom we occasionally went to see at her place, Mesnil, which adjoined the Hutterie. We also saw from time to time the noble family of the neighborhood, the Saint-Juliens, although their station in life was far above our own. They lived in Angers during the winter and spent the summers at Aulnaie, their property, a magnificent estate which extended as far as Saint-Florent. The Count and Countess Saint-Julien had the greatest regard for my father and mother, and used often to come to the Hutterie with their only son, Monsieur René, who was about the age of Charles, and like him, was destined for the army.

To complete the list of local celebrities, I have still to mention my mother's uncle, Monsieur Chupin-Lenoir, who had made a large fortune in the leather business. Old and childless, he lived a lonely and retired life in a château in the neighborhood, but as he was a free-thinker and a notorious Freemason, my father never would consent to receive him at the Hutterie, although when my mother was first married he had made several attempts to establish friendly relations. It must be acknowledged that

there was considerable merit in repelling these advances, for Uncle Chupin was reputed to be worth at least two millions, and my parents might very naturally have cherished the idea of some day enjoying this handsome fortune, which would have insured a brilliant future for their children; but with them the first consideration was the interest of our souls and our eternal salvation, and they preferred for us straitened circumstances and even poverty, to ease procured at the expense of endangering our faith.

In the eyes of many people they would be considered foolish, but true Christians will realize that they were possessed of the highest wisdom.

I learned these details from my sister, Marguerite, for at the time of which I write I was too young to take cognizance of such matters.

My earliest recollections bring before me a terrible scene which, in spite of my tender age, was forever stamped upon my memory. It was in the month of June, 1848. I was about to enter on my seventh year. One day father and mother, who had seemed very sad for some time, shut themselves in their room after luncheon and remained there all the afternoon and far into the evening. Dinner was ready, and our old nurse, Françoise, had knocked at their door a number of times without receiving any response. At last they came down. Mother's eyes were red, and father seemed very absent-minded. After dinner my poor father caressed us for a long

time—Marguerite and me—and told us we must be very good and not give my mother any trouble during his absence. He said that he must leave for Paris next day with his regiment, and that he would take my brother Charles with him.¹ When I asked him why he had to leave us, he said that there were many “bad children” in Paris, and that soldiers were being sent there to make them good.²

“I depend on you, Marguerite,” he said. “You are now almost eighteen. Comfort and sustain your mother. Pray for me. Ask God to give me grace to do my duty—my whole duty.” A few moments later he mounted his horse, and left with Charles for Angers.

I did not understand much of what father had said to us. I cried because my mother and sister cried, but next day I forgot all about it and went back to my play as usual.

One morning at about eight o'clock (I learned later that it was the twenty-eighth of June) I was alone with my mother in her room. Marguerite was practising on the piano downstairs in the parlor. I had just finished saying my prayers, when the maid came in and handed the paper to mother, who hastily opened it and began to read eagerly. She had done so every day since father went away.

¹ Charles had left Saint-Cyr two years before, and had just been made lieutenant in father's regiment.

² Those terrible days of June, 1848, when the blood of so many Frenchmen was shed, were not far off. My father was to be one of the first victims.

Suddenly I saw her tremble, grow dreadfully pale, and lean over on the table. An instant later she fell to the floor, where she lay without the least sign of life. I rushed to her and began to call her with all my might. Then, thinking she was dead, I screamed at the top of my voice, which brought Marguerite and the maid running upstairs. They lifted my mother on to the bed, and she opened her eyes an instant, and pointed toward the paper which had fallen to the floor.

"There!" she said, in a weak but distinct tone, "the horrible thing—it is not true, is it, Marguerite?"

My sister stooped to pick up the paper. No sooner had she cast her eyes upon it than she began to tremble violently, while tears coursed down her cheeks. Falling on her knees before the crucifix, she cried, "O God, have mercy on my father's soul! Have mercy on my dear mother! Save her!"

She rose and returned to where mother lay apparently lifeless.

"Run, quick, for the priest and the doctor!" she said to the maid. "Perhaps there is still time;" and she strove to revive poor mother, while old Françoise ran with all her might to Saint-Laurent.

All this time I stood motionless, paralyzed with fear. I felt, in a confused way, that something had happened to father, but I dared not ask what, for fear of hearing something dreadful. I wanted to cry out, but my throat refused to utter a sound.

The room seemed to turn around, I felt myself falling, and then I lost consciousness.

When I came to myself, I was on Guitte's lap, with her arms about me. "Come, Paul dear," she said. "Come over to mother. She wants you." And she carried me to mother's bed.

The doctor was there, and also our pastor, both of them much distressed, for they were old friends of our family. Mother had regained consciousness, but she seemed very weak. She stretched out her arms to me, and gathered me to her breast. Then she motioned Marguerite to come near.

"Swear to me, daughter," she said. "Lay your hand on the crucifix and promise me that you will be a mother to your brother Paul."

Marguerite raised her hand, and, in a trembling voice, did as she was desired.

"And you, Paul," continued mother, "promise me that you will look on Marguerite as your mother, and obey her as you would me."

I promised, without well knowing what I said, for I was choked with grief.

"Good-bye, children," my mother then said. "I am going to join your father in heaven. I have no fear for him. He was well prepared. As for myself, in spite of my sins, I trust in the mercy of my Saviour, and I go without fear before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. But I am tormented about Charles! What has become of him? Mary, Mother Immaculate, I leave him in your care! Good-bye,

my children. We will watch over you from above." Then she ceased speaking, and became terribly pale.

The doctor turned his head. "Take away the child," he said; and I saw the priest kneel down with Marguerite and my nurse. Then I was seized with violent convulsions, and lost consciousness a second time.

Next day, when I opened my eyes, my sister was sitting by my bed with our good pastor.

"Come, Paul dear," she said, "you must say your prayers with me, as you used to do with mother every morning. Mamma is in heaven now, and so is papa, and they are praying for their dear little Paul that God will make him always good so that some day he may go there too and be with them."

I understood then, as well as a child of six can understand, that I had lost my dear father and mother, and I began to sob. My tears were a relief and eased my heart. I said my prayers with Marguerite, and it seemed to me that I loved her more than I ever did before.

"You will be my mother now; won't you, Guiguitte?"

"Yes, my darling. Only you must ask our dear Lord to give you the grace to be very obedient."

Then, turning to Abbé Aubry, she said, "Isn't it awful to lose both father and mother at once? I dreaded this all along. I was sure that if father were killed, mother would not survive the shock, for you know she had a bad form of heart disease.

I tried hard to keep her from reading the paper, for fear that she would see bad news in it, but she never was willing to give it up, and was always the first to read it in the morning. Here, Father," she added, handing the priest the paper which was the cause of my mother's seizure, "this is what killed her."

And our good pastor, in a voice trembling with emotion, read the account of the bloody battle of the 25th. The following is the passage describing my father's death:

"Why must the triumph of law and order be saddened by the sacrifice of valuable lives? At the moment of going to press we learn of the death of the gallant Colonel Leclère, who was shot through the heart as he advanced to the assault of the barricade in the Faubourg du Temple. A shot fired from an upper window brought the brave officer to the ground, and a few moments later he expired in the arms of his son, Lieutenant Charles Leclère, who happened to be near his father when he was struck. We extend to the family of this noble officer our deep and sincere sympathy."

Further on it said:

"We are told that General Cavaignac decorated for meritorious services in action Lieutenant Leclère, who during the entire morning exposed himself to the greatest danger in the performance of his duties, and led his command in a most efficient manner. The General unfastened the cross of honor which adorned the breast of the lamented Colonel, and, turning to the son of the dead man, said, 'France transfers to your breast the cross of your heroic father. Walk in his footsteps and you will be a valiant soldier.' This praise, so well deserved, will, we hope, soften to some extent the overwhelming grief of the young officer and of his family."

Hardly had the Abbé finished reading this when a letter was brought in from Charles, announcing that he would arrive that very evening with our father's body. Poor brother! as yet he was aware of only half of his misfortune.

"I will hurry over to Angers, my dear Marguerite," said our kind-hearted pastor, "and be there when Charles arrives, so as to prepare him as gently as possible for this fresh blow."

My sister gratefully agreed to this proposition of Abbé Aubry, and he left at once, in order to reach the station before Charles could arrive.

How long that day seemed! We both dreaded and longed for Charles to come. At last our poor brother came to us: it was pitiful to see him. The fatigue of two days' fighting and the long sorrowful journey had completely exhausted him. We threw ourselves into his arms, and all three wept a long time there in mother's room where they had placed the two coffins.

I remember well how Marguerite begged the friends who were also there weeping, to leave us to ourselves for a little. When we were alone we knelt down beside the mortal remains of my father and mother. Marguerite made me say the prayers which I had said every day with mother. Then she made me promise with my hand upon the bodies of our parents ever to remain faithful to God and to be ready to die rather than offend Him by a mortal sin. Afterwards I heard poor Guitte say between her sobs, "My God, I offer you my life for this child whose mother I have now become. I will sacrifice myself entirely. I am ready to suffer any bodily pain, and to be completely mortified in my desires and affections, if only Paul may one day reach heaven."

I did not then fully understand what she was saying. I only grasped the general meaning of her words; but years later when I read, after my sister's death, notes which she had made on events concerning her spiritual life, I found among them this prayer which she had said beside the coffins of my parents. I will show how this heroic sacrifice was accepted.

Charles, too, bowed with grief, joined in Marguerite's fervent prayer and, like me, promised to be faithful to his God. He, at least, would keep his vow! He then told us all the circumstances of father's glorious death. The barricade had been successfully assaulted, and father, standing sword in hand upon the obstruction composed of paving stones, which he had just captured, turned to give an order to his command, when he was hit in the heart by a bullet shot from a window near by. Charles it was who caught him as he fell, and heard the few words he was still able to utter.

"Kiss them for me," he said. "Tell your mother I died at my post, and, as I firmly hope, in grace with God." An instant later he said again, "I am at peace, I received Holy Communion this morning. I offer up my life for France and for the Church."

These were his last words. It was just after he died that General Cavaignac, who had been present during the assault on the barricade, took father's cross of honor, and placed it upon Charles' breast.

Our loss was terrible indeed, but we were proud of father's glorious death, and as for my mother, she was a saint. Everybody said so. Many people whom we did not know at all came from Angers and from places near by to the funeral, and there were also some officers of father's regiment sent from Paris to Saint-Laurent to follow the body of their Colonel to the grave. All the parish priests of the canton were there, and our own pastor, Abbé Aubry, who celebrated the Mass, was interrupted many times by his tears. Many of the people in church wept, too. After Mass they carried the two caskets to the cemetery of Saint-Laurent, and here many speeches were made, but I do not remember a word of them. After the ceremonies we went back to the Hutterie with Abbé Aubry and my aunt Dumoulin, who stayed with us during luncheon.

When the meal was nearly over there was a consultation as to where Marguerite and I were to live in the future. Charles, who was naturally our guardian and protector, could not stay with us. He was compelled to return in a few days to his post in Paris. Marguerite was still too young to remain at the Hutterie by herself. What was to become of us? Our old uncle, Monsieur Chupin-Lenoir, had come the day before to Charles and Marguerite, and had offered to educate me and provide for my future, but his offer had been politely declined. For this I should be most thankful to Almighty God, for under the direction of such a man I should in

all likelihood have lost the faith forever. Madame de Saint-Julien, my mother's good friend, had come at once to beg Marguerite to go and live with her, for she loved my sister as if she were her own daughter, and Marguerite was devoted to her, too. Charles thought this a very desirable arrangement, and his advice was that this advantageous offer be accepted. But Marguerite absolutely declined to do so. She said that the Count and Countess, good Christians though they were, lived in a world which was very different from ours, that they were entirely too rich and that such surroundings would be most unfavorable to my being properly brought up.

I understood later on that there were other motives of a more intimate nature, which also actuated Marguerite in her decision. Her exquisite tact and delicacy guided her in the matter. I shall have occasion to revert to this later.

The discussion took place at luncheon, as I said; and just at this point my aunt Dumoulin took the floor, and in her curt, dry manner, delivered herself as follows:

"Chupin? Never while I live! He is an old infidel. Saint-Julien and his lady?—good people, but that would be bringing Paul up in a candy box, and you, Guitte, would soon become an affected minx with all those people you would see at Aulnaie. Come home with your old aunt Dumoulin. She is an old fool, but for all that she has a good heart. You'll see. Your mother confided Paul to you, Guitte.

You shall bring him up just as you please. I shall not have a word to say in the matter, always providing you do not make a *Blue* of him. I do not want to cherish a viper in my bosom! Then when I cross the river (which must be before long, for I am seventy-five now) you will have my property. It is not much, but what there is of it is good. Mesnil has a hundred and fifty acres. If they are worth a farthing, they are worth a hundred thousand francs. Is it settled? One, two—decide!” And Mademoiselle Dumoulin punctuated her speech by swallowing a glass of brandy at one draught.

We loved my aunt very much in spite of her abruptness and strange ways, for she had a heart of gold. Charles and Marguerite were for accepting her offer, and Abbé Aubry fully approved, for Mlle. Dumoulin was his right hand in all his charitable undertakings. They had known each other since the great war of the Vendée, and were old friends who had both seen evil days. The matter was settled then and there. Charles was to have the Hutterie, which my aunt would manage in his interest, and Marguerite and I would inherit Mesnil, together with some small amount which would amply suffice for our needs until such time as Marguerite should marry.

It was decided that we should remain at the Hutterie until Charles' leave expired, and that on his departure for Paris we would go to Mesnil to live. And that is how we came to be under my aunt's care.

CHAPTER II.

MY AUNT'S HOME.

TWAS on the first of September, 1848, that my sister and I established ourselves definitely with our old Aunt Dumoulin. Our belongings had been sent there a few days before. My brother Charles took us over to Mesnil, and left that same evening to rejoin his regiment. We were all three very sad at the thought of being separated for what promised to be a long time, and, besides, it was very hard to leave the Hutterie. It was almost like suffering over again the loss of our parents, so full of memories of them was the old home where we had lived so happily together. In spite of my tender age, I, too, gave way to violent grief, and when the time came to go, Charles had to take me by force and carry me out to the carriage.

When we reached Mesnil, our spirits were even more depressed by the contrast between the place we had just left and that in which we must now take up our abode. Mesnil seemed to us as gloomy and unattractive as the Hutterie was bright and beautiful. We were no longer near the little stream which ran murmuring through our fields and meadows. My aunt's house was set in the midst of culti-

vated land. From the ground floor there was absolutely no vista. The view was shut off by stone walls or high hedges, which forbade the eye to roam at will over the surrounding country. There were scarcely any trees, grass, or flowers. My aunt, who knew the value of every inch of ground, would have considered it pure folly to devote any space to flowers or turf merely for the purpose of pleasing the eye. In consequence, peas, onions, hemp and potatoes flourished on all sides and displayed themselves before the very door steps.

To be strictly truthful I must mention one beautiful feature of the place—a superb avenue of chestnut trees which extended as far as the eye could reach, and led to the commons along the banks of the Gemme. It was the only place where one might find a little shade and coolness in summer.

My sister had timidly suggested one day to my aunt that she come and live at the Hutterie, whence it would be an easy matter to manage both properties. The worthy woman gazed at her for several minutes in open-mouthed astonishment for sheer lack of words in which to give vent to her feelings.

“Have you lost your mind, my dear Guitte?” she exclaimed at length. “You want me to go and live at the Hutterie? Do you think I would leave a good dwelling like Mesnil for a great rambling place like the Hutterie, where you raise nothing but roses and lilies? Well, I never in all my days! My dear, do you take me for a fool? We shall live at Mesnil. It

will be better for you and Paul, too. With me you will learn what order and economy are. If your father and mother—God rest their souls!—had looked less at the blue sky and more at the world around them, they would, in my humble opinion, have succeeded better in the affairs of this world without any harm to those of the next. Come! You will soon forget about the Hutterie, and you will see that it is very comfortable at Mesnil—that I promise you. At your place, Paul would grow up to be a good-for-nothing—that's certain! My place is not so pretty, I acknowledge, but we make a little money there, and it will come in very handy when you have to pay for Paul's schooling and buy your own wedding clothes."

Marguerite made a virtue of necessity, and told my aunt that she would be contented at Mesnil.

"All right, little one!" replied the good woman. "You are still but a slip of a girl, and too much of a fine lady, but you will come out all right! We'll see!"

And so we arrived at Mesnil with heavy hearts, sad above all at having to part with my brother for so long a time. My aunt was waiting for us and greeted us heartily. The dear old lady concealed a tender heart under a rough exterior.

"Come in," she cried, embracing us warmly, "and do justice to your old aunt's dinner. We have some good soup, a duck with olives, rum omelette, a nice salad, and, best of all, a glass of wine bottled in

1825. Charles X! There is no more wine made like that, let me tell you. The vintage of two years ago isn't worth a farthing. Louis Philippe, indeed! You won't get it every day, though. Once does not mean always."

We had been in my aunt's room a few minutes, when a clumsy country girl opened the door a little way, and pushing head and shoulders through the crack, announced timidly, "Mamzelle, soup is on the table."

"Is my name Mamzelle Soup? You'll have to learn a thing or two, Cillette, if you expect to enter the service of the nobility. You'll never be fit for anything except to look after the animals."

"Yes, Mamzelle," said the girl, seemingly unmoved by the imperious tone of her mistress. "You'd better look out not to burn your mouth. The soup's awful hot," she added confidentially.

"That will do," said my aunt. "Go back to the kitchen, and tell Rose to be careful not to burn the duck. While we dispose of the soup, you can go and carry cabbages to the cows, and afterwards come back and wait on us."

We followed my Aunt Dumoulin into the dining-room, and as our troubles had not taken away our appetites, we did honor to the cooking of old Rose, the maid of all-work of the establishment. By the end of the meal, our spirits had somewhat revived. In youth gloomy ideas are easily thrust aside, and we were all three so young!

After luncheon we tearfully bade farewell to Charles, as he had to leave for Paris.

"Courage, little sister!" he said to Marguerite, when my aunt left the room for a few moments. "It will not be very lively here—that I can see; but I still think it was the best thing to do. Nevertheless, if you cannot get accustomed to it, if you are too unhappy, write and tell me, and I will come back and we will go and live at the Hutterie together. If necessary, I will resign, and work here for our living."

This was a great deal for the poor fellow to say, for he was wrapt up in his profession. Marguerite reassured him by saying that he was not to worry about her, as she was prepared to begin her new life courageously and even joyfully, and that she would see to it that I did the same.

The moment of parting had come, and Charles, realizing that he must cut short his farewells, mounted his horse, and started off at a brisk gait on the road to Angers.

Our hearts swelled, and we felt very lonely as we watched him out of sight, but Marguerite, who was very resolute, soon had herself in hand, and was able to meet with a smile my aunt's proposal that we take a walk over the place. It was about three in the afternoon. Mademoiselle Dumoulin put on her great straw hat, took with her a hunting-piece, in case we should come across a hare or a partridge, and started out to show us her little kingdom. Mar-

guerite compelled herself to be interested in the expedition, thereby greatly pleasing the old lady.

"We shall make something of you, little one," she said. "You have not many ideas in your head as yet, but with patience you will improve."

Then she began to describe at length the method she pursued in cultivating her land. Here she had oats; yonder, hemp; in that field, cabbages; further on, wheat, and then cabbages again.

"Remember well, child," she said, "you can never have too many cabbages. What would we feed to the cattle when the hay crop failed as it did this year? Those stupid Chopins¹ never plant enough cabbages, and then they complain that their cattle are dying of hunger. Besides, they don't manure their land. You have to fertilize; see, Marguerite?"

Suddenly my aunt stopped in the middle of her dissertation. A fine hare came out of the bushes a few yards from us, and leisurely made his way down the foot-path that ran along the field in which we stood. Just then my aunt had her snuff-box in her hand. Coolly and without the least haste, she took a huge pinch of snuff, replaced the snuff-box in her pocket, and raised her gun.

"See, there, children," she said. "To-morrow's dinner is trying to get away from us. It is time to stop him."

The hare quickened his pace. She put the weapon to her shoulder, took aim for a second, and fired.

¹ The Chopins were tenants of one of my aunt's farms.

The creature made a leap upward, then fell back with his feet in the air, sending forth pitiful cries and kicking convulsively. Catherine Dumoulin, quiet as ever, picked up the animal by his hind legs, and dealt him two sharp blows on the nape of the neck with the edge of her hand. That was the end of the hare, and I gazed in admiration at my aunt.

"Now, you see, my boy, how it's done," said she laughingly. "All the men in our family love to hunt, and some of the women, too. I will teach you how to settle a hare. Yes, yes; you must learn to shoot. Perhaps the king may have need of your gun some day. If I had not had mine in '93, I would not be here now, and more than one Blue would be here in my place doubtless."

So saying, my aunt put the hare in a bag which she carried over her shoulders.

"It is time to go on," said she. "As I was saying, Marguerite, it is necessary to fertilize. It is not in that direction that economy is to be practised. But beware of the fertilizers which come from Angers! There is manure *and* manure! Your mother never spoke to you on this subject, did she? That is why you are not more practical. However, all that will come in time."

"Yes, aunt." "Certainly, aunt." "Very true, aunt," poor Marguerite would say, after each new proposition of the worthy woman.

In this manner we visited the three farms, Chauvinière, Dervallière and the dairy farm Clouet, get-

ting back to Mesnil at supper time. I was delighted with the walk, but poor Marguerite found it exceedingly long, in spite of her efforts to be cheerful. However, there was little danger of the lessons on agriculture and the ingenious observations on the subject of fertilizers being of frequent occurrence.

"Now you are at home, children," said my aunt, after supper. "Do just as you please. This is your room, Guitte," she added, showing us into a large chamber on the second floor, from which we had a tolerably good view. The apartment had two windows, from one of which could be seen the roof of our dear Hutterie, and from the other the spire of the church at Saint-Laurent. In the distance, glistening like an emerald beneath the fires of the setting sun, the Gemme meandered in graceful curves, sweeping its fair waters toward the Loire, which appeared like an azure ribbon, bordering the far-away horizon. We could not tear our eyes from the loved landscape. At last our aunt roused us from our reverie.

"This is for you, Paul," she said, opening a small room which communicated with my sister's. "And now, children, I leave you to yourselves. Your old aunt will not interfere with you. To-morrow the rest of your belongings will be brought over from the Hutterie—your books and piano and all the other gimcracks. Then you may occupy yourselves as you please. I only ask one thing of you and that is that you be prompt at meals. Breakfast whenever you

like; dinner at twelve o'clock sharp, and supper at seven in the evening; bed-time according to each one's fancy; on Sunday, high mass and vespers, as is only right,—and there you are! Good-night, dears, sleep well, and say a little prayer for your old aunt."

Upon this the kind creature betook herself to her night's repose, although it was scarcely more than half-past seven. But then she had to be up and about by four o'clock in the morning to get men and beasts to work, herself setting the example of industry, with the energy of youth, despite her seventy-five years.

The sight of our house in the distance had made me homesick and I began to cry. Marguerite, in order to distract my attention and amuse me, told me that evening the story of my aunt's life, and as it is in my opinion remarkable in more ways than one, I will, if you like, rehearse for your benefit Marguerite's recital.

CHAPTER III.

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF AUNT DUMOULIN.

CATHERINE DUMOULIN, my respected aunt, was born in 1775, in the parish of Saint-Florent-le-Vieil, at the château of la Roche, where dwelt her father, steward of the estates of the Marquis de Valmont. The Lord of la Roche had the greatest confidence in his steward, who had administered his affairs for many years with scrupulous fidelity. Madame Dumoulin, my aunt's mother, had been much more highly educated than most people of her station in life, and was employed as reader by the marchioness, also assisting her in the instruction of her two children, Claire and René. Monsieur and Madame Dumoulin had likewise two children, a son and a daughter, who were admitted to the companionship of the young Valmonts, and shared in their studies and their play. The four children were united by the closest affection, but this did not prevent the son and daughter of the steward from being ever mindful of the distance which separated them from the noble scions of the Valmonts. Catherine, in particular, was devotedly attached to Mademoiselle Claire, who was her foster-sister. The two young

girls were inseparable companions, and formed a most striking contrast in appearance and disposition. Claire at eighteen was frail and delicate, very aristocratic in her bearing, and with a sort of native dignity which was not, however, at variance with her tender heart and gentle ways. The bailiff's daughter was endowed with most astonishing muscular strength and vigor. Her plebeian countenance with its energetic and strongly marked features, her strong and emphatic voice, and the vivid, healthful color in her cheeks contrasted strangely with the distinguished carriage, harmonious speech and delicate profile of the young patrician.

There was not a young man in all the country-side who could wrest the palm from Catherine in a foot-race or any other athletic exercise. By the firesides in the evening the tale was admiringly told of how Catherine had challenged Mademoiselle Claire to drive her ponies harnessed to an English phaeton, while she, Catherine, held back the carriage with one hand. In vain did Mademoiselle Claire, entering into the fun, whip up her ponies. Catherine's grasp of steel paralyzed all their efforts, and the vehicle did not advance by one revolution of the wheels. When the narrator had finished his story the company would cry out in chorus, "There's a girl for you!"

Paul, the steward's son, and Monsieur René, then about twenty years old, were more alike, being of about the same height and build, both proficient in

field sports, both very quick-tempered, but easily pacified.

The two families were living in happy tranquillity when the revolution burst forth. The Marquis and René went to join the ranks of the force from Vendée which was then marching upon Saumur. The faithful Dumoulin and his son accompanied them. The Valmont ladies remained at the château, in the keeping of Providence, with the wives of the peasants of the surrounding country, almost all of whom were fighting in Bonchamp's army.

When Catherine heard of the first successes of the Catholic and royal army, she could not restrain her excitement.

"And I have to stay here!" she cried, shedding tears of vexation and anger. "I, who can hit a six-franc piece at two hundred paces, must remain here, while my father and brother, the Marquis and Monsieur René are braving death every day for our holy religion and the king!"

Her mother, the marchioness, and even Claire, who usually had so much influence over her, could not reconcile her to her lot.

"But what would become of us if you left?" said they, at a loss for arguments. "Some one must remain to take care of us. What would we do, if the Blues were to come and carry us off?"

"Just let them come and try it," cried Catherine, with an angry gesture. "Let them come, if they dare, and carry you off to their Judas tribunal in

Nantes! I swear, if they do, Catherine Dumoulin will go and free you!"

Madame Dumoulin was in constant fear that she would do something rash, and every night she double-locked her in her room, in order to prevent her running away. She might have spared herself the pains. Catherine had smelt powder. One fine night she jumped from the window of her room, which was in the second story, climbed over the wall of the park, and throwing herself upon a farm horse, galloped off to join the royal army. She carried with her an excellent double-barreled gun and a pair of pistols. Past-master in the art of shooting, she was likely to lay more than one Blue low, before she gave up her weapons.

We need not live over again with her that epoch so glorious, and, alas! at the same time so sad, of the wars in Vendée. Suffice it to say that Catherine fought bravely at Nantes, Torfou, Cholet, the crossing of the Loire and throughout the entire campaign of the Catholic army on the other side of the river. She was among the number of those intrepid soldiers who responded to the heroic appeal of Lesclapart at Torfou, and by their irresistible onslaught changed defeat into victory. It was at Torfou, also, that she had the great happiness of saving the life of her father and the Marquis, who had fallen into the hands of some of Kléber's grenadiers. She concealed herself with a few sharpshooters behind a thick hedge, whence her well-aimed fusilade threw

into alarm and confusion the small squad which was making off with the two prisoners. Then suddenly rushing out, followed by her companions, all shouting, "Long live the King! Death to the Blues!" she forced the enemy to abandon their captives. Poor girl! She only prolonged for a short time the lives that were so dear to her. A few weeks later the Marquis and Monsieur Dumoulin fell, mortally wounded in the bloody fight at Cholet, and expired upon the battlefield, while Paul and Monsieur René, covered with wounds, were taken prisoners, dragged to Nantes, and guillotined upon the Place du Bouffay.

Catherine crossed the Loire with the royal army. She hoped that her mother and the Valmont ladies had been able to reach the coast and take refuge in England, as she had advised them to do. She herself remained faithful to the flag to the very last, and after the disaster at Savenay she succeeded in recrossing to the left bank of the river and joining the army of Charette, who still held the Blues in check in lower Vendée.

And here I must describe a notable achievement, in which Aunt Dumoulin played the chief part.

About the middle of January, 1794, a few days after the defeat at Savenay, she suddenly learned from a prisoner who had escaped the massacres at Nantes that her mother, the Marquise de Valmont and her daughter Claire were confined there in a prison, from which they would be removed only to be cast into the Loire.

Her plans were soon made. She sought out three brave fellows of Saint-Florent who had been with her all during the campaign north of the Loire, and who had also recently joined the forces of Charette.

"We must manage," she said, "to get into Nantes, and rescue the Valmont ladies, and get them across the river. After that they can make their way to England."

Catherine did not think it necessary to unfold her entire scheme to her companions. She simply exacted of them a promise of obedience; so the three men of Vendée swore on the crucifix that they would be faithful, and they prepared to follow their brave young leader.

The first requisites were Republican uniforms, and it was not long before an opportunity of obtaining them presented itself. Our friends had crossed the Loire at Trentemont, in the middle of the night, in a small boat barely large enough to hold four persons. A dozen times they were on the point of being swamped. At last, at about three o'clock in the morning, they reached the right bank of the river. Hardly had they gone ashore, when they came upon a small detachment of Republican grenadiers, who were spending the night in the hut of some fishermen upon the river-bank.

An armed sentry guarded the door. The four Vendéans drew near on tiptoe without arousing his attention. In an instant Catherine, having advanced

to within two paces of where he stood, raised her gun, and brought it down with terrific force on the head of the soldier. The Blue dropped dead in his tracks, without uttering a sound. The Vendéans then rushed into the cabin, and dispatched with their poignards the five or six grenadiers whom they found sound asleep. Catherine had cautioned them not to fire, for fear of giving the alarm to the enemy. In a few moments the boys of Saint-Florent were disguised as grenadiers of the Republic, and my aunt had donned a costume, half-feminine, half military prepared for the occasion. A red skirt descended to her knees, a blue jacket composed the upper part of her dress, whilst around her waist she had wound the tri-color as a sash, thrusting therein a brace of pistols. The liberty cap completed her disguise.

"Friends," she said, laughingly, to her comrades, "allow me to present the avenger of Marat."

"Long live the King! Hurrah for Mamzelle Catherine!" shouted the enthusiastic Vendéans.

"Softly, men," said the young girl. "So far so good; but we have now come to the hard part of the business. The next thing to be done is to muzzle Carrier for twenty-four hours."

"Bravo, Mamzelle Catherine. Forward, march! You can count on us," cried the boys, who were afraid of nothing.

There was no time to lose, for Catherine had heard the evening before that her mother and the Valmont ladies had been sentenced that very day,

and that within the next forty-eight hours they would be drowned in the river.

The little band, after making a hasty meal, left the banks of the Loire and proceeded toward the headquarters of that ferocious officer of the convention,¹ who, in the course of the previous three months, had put to death thousands of victims at Nantes.

Catherine parted with her escort at the entrance to the official residence, and, walking boldly in, accosted the guard stationed on the ground floor.

"I wish to see the Representative," she said to the soldiers, who were seated around a gaming table.

"Citizen Carrier is not at home to-day, citizen," replied a half-drunk corporal. "Not even to members of the fair sex. Come again to-morrow, if you like."

"Tell him," said Catherine, unmoved, "That I come from Paris with instructions from the Committee of Public Safety, and that I have no time to wait."

"The devil! How you talk, citizen," said the soldier. "One would think you were in command here!"

¹ Many were shot every day at the quarries at Gigant, or met death on the scaffold of Bouffay, but this was not enough to satisfy the barbarity of this monster in human form. He had just invented a sort of boat with a movable bottom, by means of which a hundred victims at a time were suddenly let down into the waters of the Loire. This tyrant remained in power until the thirteenth of February (25 pluviöse, year II). He was executed after the ninth thermidor.

"I am enough in command to tell you," rejoined Catherine, "that if you do not take me to Carrier in five minutes you are done for, and I would not give two farthings for your skin. I am the bearer of state papers, and if you hinder me in carrying out my orders, I swear by the ashes of the divine Marat you will answer for it."

Impressed by the determined tone and resolute air of the young woman, the soldier obeyed, and led the way to the presence of the redoubtable pro-consul. On reaching the second story, he opened a door leading into a dark corridor, down which he disappeared, after telling my aunt to await his return. Presently he came back.

"You can go in," he said, "but the Representative is very busy, and I warn you that he is in a very bad humor to-day, and for your own good you had best do nothing to irritate him."

So saying he showed Catherine down a narrow passage leading to Carrier's sanctum. A huge iron door opened before them, and the soldier, hiding himself against the wall, made a sign to Catherine that she might enter. Hardly had she crossed the threshold when the door was hermetically closed by means of a spring, which could only be operated from the outside. My aunt realized that there was no escape in that direction, but this did not cause her any anxiety. She raised her eyes, and saw before her a man of some forty years of age, seated behind what appeared to be an iron wall about five

feet high. This was Carrier. Only his head was visible, his shoulders and the rest of his body being hidden behind the massive barrier which came between him and his visitors. The harsh, restless gaze of the pro-consul had in it the timidity of the wild animal. His small gray eyes opened and shut incessantly and rolled continually from side to side, while his matted, greasy locks fell to his shoulders and almost covered his forehead. One experienced at sight of him a sensation of mingled contempt, disgust, and terror.

The tyrant who kept the people of Nantes in a state of abject terror, seemed himself to be a victim of continual fear. He seemed to look upon everyone who came into his presence as a possible assassin. At the least sign, the first word arousing his suspicion, he could drop out of sight as if by magic. At his right, within arm's reach, was a small door leading into an adjoining apartment. By going through this door he could forestall in the twinkling of an eye any attempt at violence, and at the same time shut his visitor in a trap.

In two seconds my aunt had taken in the situation and determined upon her plan of action.

"What do you want, citizen?" said Carrier. "To what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"I have come to report to you certain traitors," responded Catherine. "They want to bring the priests and kings back again." And so saying she drew nearer to the partition.

"Not so near, citizen," cried Carrier, bobbing down behind his breast-works. "Say what you have to say from where you are, and do not attempt to come nearer, otherwise I—"

He got no further, for Catherine, grasping the top of the partition, had vaulted lightly over it, pulled a pistol from her belt, and now held it at the head of the miserable wretch.

"You make the least noise, and I will shoot," said she.

"What do you want," stammered the tyrant, white with terror. "Don't kill me! In God's name, have some pity on me!"

"Don't you dare to pronounce that Holy Name, you scoundrel," said Catherine, with an expression of supreme contempt. "If you value your life, waste no words, but obey me on the spot."

"What must I do?" returned Carrier, trembling.

"Where are the Marquise de Valmont and her daughter and Madame Dumoulin?"

"I don't know," said Carrier.

"You will have to tell, nevertheless, or in one second I will shoot, as sure as I am Catherine Dumoulin and the daughter of the woman you intend to murder."

"But if you fire, the guard will run up, and they will kill you."

"What is that to me, so I rid the earth of such a monster as you. Come, speak!"

Carrier, trembling in every limb, opened a reg-

ister which lay before him, and ran over the names in a long list which filled several pages.

"Madame Dumoulin and the Valmonts are in the magazine," said he.

"That is to say, in good French, that this evening they will be food for the fishes in the river?" queried Catherine.

Carrier remained silent. The unfortunate wretch shook as if he had the ague. His whole body shuddered convulsively, and he kept his eye on Catherine, with a beseeching look on his face.

"You will sign an order to release immediately on demand of the avenger of Marat, Lucrèce Aspasia Goujon, and her three companions, the aforesaid Valmont, her daughter Claire, and the woman Dumoulin," said the young girl.

"No!" said Carrier.

"Ah! You say 'No,' do you, scoundrel!" and Catherine placed the pistol against the temple of the member of the Convention. "You sign!" said she, "or in two seconds you will find out that there is a hell!"

The wretched creature obeyed, terrified, wrote the order, and handed it to Catherine, who put it in her belt.

"And now," said she, "I give you fair warning. Don't begin to plan changing these ladies from one prison to another, or having me arrested. I shall find it convenient to spend twenty-four hours in Nantes. There is no use trying to put obstacles in

my way, for if the worst comes to the worst, I have so arranged that you die before me. Do you understand?"

"Yes," stammered Carrier, trembling like a whipped cur.

"Good-day," said Catherine, "and take that in the name of all the widows and orphans you have made," and she spat in the face of the pro-consul. "And now you can ring. I am ready to go."

Carrier wiped his face, and rang the bell. The young girl was already on the other side of the iron barrier. The door opened, and my aunt went down and out into the street, where she rejoined her companions.

"Now the hardest part of the work is done," said she. "The wild beast is cowed, and for to-day he will not dare show his teeth."¹

Then, without undue haste, for she was sure the cowardice of the tyrant would prevent him from breaking his word, she began preparations for the second part of her enterprise. She went with her

¹Crétineau Joly and several other historians of Vendée cite an instance analogous to the one we have just described. Bernard de Marigny, whose daring was proverbial, entered Nantes in disguise, and presented himself before Carrier. "I am Marigny, the 'brigand' general," said he. "I find it necessary to be in Nantes for about eight hours, and I do not want to be captured. If you have me arrested I have arranged matters so that you will die before I do." Carrier submitted to the threat, and allowed the Vendéan general to transact his business unmolested.

Certain authors give this anecdote without vouching for its being genuine, but the well-known intrepidity of Marigny and the low, small traits of Carrier render it at least credible.

companions and hired a good boat in which to convey the rescued ladies across the river that night. They then went to an inn, and took some food and a few hours' rest. About five o'clock in the evening, at dusk, they betook themselves to the prison. It was the time for drowning the prisoners. A crowd of low, depraved people were awaiting the appearance of the condemned persons, prepared to enjoy the spectacle of their death-struggle. The deadly barges were all ready to receive their victims. The poor people condemned to this frightful death, women, children, old men, priests, nuns, captured soldiers, formed a long line extending from the vaults of the magazine to the river bank. Drunk with blood as much as with wine, the crowd flung themselves upon these unfortunate beings, cursing them, striking them and spitting on them. Some in a fury tore off their garments, telling them derisively that they could swim better without them. The victims, who were innocent of any crime, were bound together, two by two, regardless of their heart-rending cries for mercy. This hideous spectacle was enacted over and over again before the stupefied inhabitants of Nantes.

Our Vendéans had some trouble in singling from out the crowd of prisoners those of whom they were in search, but at last they found them, near the end of the sad procession, pale and so weak that they could scarcely move along, tightly bound, half-clothed and shivering in the icy wind.

"In the name of the law, I claim these three prisoners, the so-called Valmont, her daughter and the woman Dumoulin," cried Catherine in a tone of command, and pressing through the gaping crowd, she cut with her poignard the ropes which bound the captives.

"Catherine, Catherine! save us!" the poor women cried weakly.

"Hush! Be quiet, or we are lost!" whispered the girl quickly.

"Ah—ha! So-called Marquise de Valmont, she continued, in a loud voice, "you will conspire with the enemies of the people, will you? Before you die you must go before the bar of the Convention and divulge the names of your accomplices and the place where you have hidden the treasures of the nation. By order of the Committee of Public Safety, I, Lucrèce Aspasia Goujon, and my faithful grenadiers will take you to Paris with your daughter and your maid, who are in the plot with you." And Catherine, by the light of a torch, showed the astonished guards the order of Carrier.

"Very well, citizen, that is different," said the chief of the prison guard. "Take away your prisoners, and see that they do not escape. They are treacherous aristocrats, and will try to avoid the justice of the people."

"Be easy, citizens," responded Catherine, with a loud laugh. "Before very long the government razor will destroy that notion for them."

My aunt, placing the prisoners in charge of her companions, gave the signal to depart, and the little company soon disappeared down the dark alleys which led to the water-side.

Catherine knew of a friendly house where the fugitives could procure warm clothing and food, both of which they sorely needed. About midnight the whole party got into a boat moored to the quay called *La Fosse*, and soon the skiff, propelled by the strong arms of the boys of Saint-Florent, was rapidly cleaving through the waters of the Loire, while Catherine, seated in the stern, directed its course.

"Catherine, dear Catherine!" cried the poor women, lacking words in which to express their gratitude.

"Dear mother, Madame, Mademoiselle, I am so very happy!" said Catherine. "The Good Lord accomplished it. Without His aid I never could have succeeded," and she related all the events of the day.

The fugitives reached the left bank of the river in safety, and after walking the rest of the night, they arrived at the outposts of Charette. The General received the Valmont ladies with great kindness, and provided them with the means of leaving France the following day. The Marchioness and her daughter, accompanied by Madame Dumoulin and Catherine, traveled to Noirmontier, whence they sailed in a Danish brig for England. They remained there until the pacification. At that time the exiles

returned to France, and the Valmont ladies were so fortunate as to recover a large portion of their estates. The Marchioness rewarded liberally the three Vendéans who had aided in her rescue. Catherine, whose mother died in England, would accept nothing.

"That sort of thing is done for love, and that is all one can take for it," said she. Besides, she had some money of her own—enough to buy the property of Mesnil, and there she resolved to pass the remainder of her days.

Marguerite added some other circumstances in my aunt's career.

Her hand was often sought in marriage, in spite of the superb scar which ran across her forehead and down her right cheek. This scar was a souvenir of an artistic clash from the sabre of a Republican dragoon, who was impaled a few seconds later by a thrust of Catherine's bayonet. She refused all proposals.

"My good friend," she would say to each new aspirant, "do you want to tie a rope around your neck? There has to be a king in every household. You know that. (The Good Lord never invented the Republic.) Very well! I can swear, that, if you were to marry me, you would not be the king of the combination. Besides, I am better suited to guide the plow than to rear children. If I had children I would break them trying to dress them. My name is not Catherine for nothing, and I would rather

follow the example of my patron saint. Go and do your sighing for someone else!"

"She kept her word and never married, and I really believe it was better for her possible husband that she did," said Marguerite.

So ended my sister's narrative.

I learned later that my aunt was faithful all her life to her religion and to her political convictions. "Dog of a Republican" was the worst name she could call her enemies, or rather those who excited her indignation, for she bore no ill-will to any living soul. She was a sort of good-hearted scold, and would let fly every disagreeable epithet in her vocabulary, at the same time rendering some real kindness to the subject of her vituperations, either in the way of money or other assistance, for she was always ready to help her neighbor. The poor of the country-side knew well that they could rely on the charity of "Mamzelle Catherine," and they often had recourse to it.

"There," she would say when dispensing her gifts of fruit, vegetables, linen or money to some needy creature, "take that, and don't go and shout it from the house-tops, or I shall be tormented every day of God's world; and just give this to your wife. It will do her cough good. Tell her she is an idiot and you are no better. You'll never be anything but a Republican dog, anyhow."

Aunt Dumoulin was up every morning by four o'clock, and after her morning devotions, over which

she did not linger, she rang the bell waking the servants, and set them to work for the day. She did not spare herself in the matter of work, either. She was always doing kind things for her servants, but at the same time she was very harsh with them, and was forever grumbling about what they did or what they left undone. This had become a second nature to her. She worked in the fields until mid-day, except during the hunting season, when she took her gun, and started off at early dawn, two days in every week, accompanied by her faithful Ralph, to say good morning to the hares and partridges. The country was full of game at that time, and my aunt, being an excellent shot, would return from every expedition with a full bag. The table was plentifully supplied with venison, and during the autumn and winter we never had to buy meat.

Every year about St. Michael's day, which was the birthday of the Comte de Chambord, Catherine would prepare with much care a basket of game, which she would send to the prince at Frosdorf, with a note couched somewhat in the following terms:

"*Sire*:—You have plenty of game, I know; but it is not French game. I send you some hares and partridges killed in Anjou. May your Majesty be pleased to accept them from

Your faithful servant and subject,

CATHERINE DUMOULIN.

Formerly soldier in the Catholic and Royal Army."

As there were very few railroads in those days,

I fancy that the game was rather *high* when it reached the residence of the Comte de Chambord. The intention of Catherine was, nevertheless, fully appreciated. Besides the usual letters of acknowledgment she received, in 1854, an autograph letter from Henry V., with a ring set with a diamond. That day Catherine put on her old white cockade, relic of her days in the army, and thus adorned appeared in the streets of Saint-Laurent, much to the wonder of the good wives of the town who came running to their doors "to see Mamzelle Catherine go by."

As long as my aunt lived, the prince's gift reposed under a glass case in front of the dining-room clock. It was almost the sole object of interest to visitors to Mesnil. To be sure the proprietress herself was also something of a curiosity.

She was a good Christian in intention, but, without realizing it, she was strongly tainted with Jansenism. She received the Sacraments only once a year, and yet she often debated with herself whether it would not be better to make her Easter only every three years. She never would avail herself of the indult accorded the Bishop of Angers by the Holy Father remitting the Saturday abstinence, nor would she permit her household to do so. The year after the promulgation of the famous indult, the Bishop came to Saint-Laurent to administer Confirmation, and he assembled the principal parishioners in the priest's house, and inquired if there was

anything they would like to report to him. My aunt did not lose the opportunity of airing her grievance.

"I have nothing to complain of, your lordship, except your changing the faith."

"How now!" exclaimed the prelate, laughingly. "Don't you know, my good woman, that is a very serious accusation? If they hear of it in Rome, things will be rather uncomfortable for me."

"For the land's sake, my lord!!" rejoined my aunt. "Haven't we been told time and time again, that it was a sin to eat meat on Saturday? And now you tell us, you, that it is permitted. What are we to think? At that rate you might as well do away with purgatory, too, while you are about it."

The Bishop laughed heartily, and tried to explain to the old lady the difference between dogma and discipline; but it was time lost. Aunt Dumoulin bowed her head and stuck to her own ideas.

A few days after this an old fishmonger, who went from place to place among the towns and villages of Anjou selling herrings and sardines, came to Mesnil. He always stopped there, because Mademoiselle Dumoulin bought the fish for fastdays from him, and gave him a good drink into the bargain.

"How is business, Daddy Hureau?" said she.

"Don't speak of it, Mamzelle! Now that the Bishop allows meat on Saturday, I don't make anything at all." Then he added sententiously, "The people all like it, but I am not so sure the Good Lord likes it!"

"Quite true, Daddy Hureau, you're right. No good will come of it, that's certain."

We talked a long time together that evening, Marguerite and I, and at last I was very sleepy. Marguerite made me say my prayers, put me to bed and tucked me in, as mother used to do. I was in the land of dreams before she had finished picking up my clothes.

It was late the next morning when she came to wake me. "Come, lazy bones!" she said, "get up quick, and come to see our new house."

I dressed myself at once, said my prayers and went down to the dining room, where Marguerite brought me some good hot milk. I was in the best of humors, which was something unusual when I first got up.

"And now let's go and say good-morning to all the people and to the animals," said my sister.

We went first to the kitchen, where old Rose, my aunt's cook, bloomed in all the freshness of her seventy-eight summers. The good woman had known us for a long time, and fairly worshiped "Mamzelle Marguerite." My sister could do anything she pleased with her. After Marguerite, Rose loved better than anyone in the world, the old gray cat, Lulu, that slept all day long stretched out in front of the fire. The rats and mice might hold high carnival in the house, and Lulu would not trouble herself; and yet her mistress, who was so exacting with her subordinates, had nothing but kind words and petting for the tabby. To be sure, she made up

for it by her treatment of Lexis and Cillette, the stable boy and the girl who looked after the chickens, both of whom were under her directions. She scolded them from morning until night, which only resulted in making the poor things even more stupid than they already were by nature. Lexis and Cillette were brother and sister, belonging to the Chopins who were tenants of the Dervallière farm. The good people had a numerous family, and had placed these two out to service with my aunt, who was very good to them. Lexis¹ was twenty years old, and with the aid of a man hired by the day, he took care of the kitchen garden and the few plots of ground which my aunt reserved for cultivation under her personal direction. He also had charge of Coco, the old farm horse, and drove to the neighboring market with the products of the poultry yard and the orchard. Poor Alexis was not remarkable for his intelligence any more than his sister Cillette was, and they had to be told the simplest things over and over again before they understood.

Lexis was scandalized one day on seeing Father Berteaux, the first assistant pastor of Saint-Laurent, trapping hares in the wood where the warren belonging to my aunt was.

“Tell me, Mistress”² said he to Marguerite, is

¹ The abbreviation of Alexis, in the patois of Anjou.

² In the province of the West, the peasants, until within the past few years, always addressed the proprietors of the farm or leasehold and their children, even when the latter were still little, as “Master” or “Mistress.” The custom has died out, like so many others. Is the change for the better? We believe that respect and deference have suffered by it.

it all right for a curate to set snares like that? I've a notion it's not nice for a priest."

"Why not?" said my sister. "There's nothing wrong about it."

"Perhaps not, Mistress; but you've got learning, and you'd better look in your big books, that have everything in them. You will see then what they say about hares, and you can find out for sure whether the curate ought to catch them or not."

I could cite many little instances of the innocence of Lexis. We shall have occasion to refer to it again in the course of this story.

Cillette,¹ his sister, was quite as unsophisticated. Every time that Marguerite passed on her way in or out of the house, though it might be twenty times a day, she would get up, stand as straight as a soldier on parade, and call out at the top of her voice, "Mistress is going out! Good-day, Mamzelle!" or "Mistress is coming in—Good-day, Mamzelle!" Marguerite had time and again told her that these repeated salutations were quite unnecessary, and that it was enough to say "Good-day" to people once—in the morning. The poor girl invariably dissolved in tears, so my sister ended by letting her do as she pleased.

One day my aunt gave Cillette a box of rat poison, with orders to spread it on pieces of potato and lay these in the pantries and store-rooms and near the

¹ Cillette, Cillon, Francillette, Francillon, are diminutives of François and Françoise in many of the dialects of the West.

fruit-bins. Terrified because she had heard it was poison, Cillette buried the "stuff," as she called it, and scattered carefully where she had been told a plentiful supply of inoffensive potato, over which the rats licked their chops.

But let us go on.

After paying our respects to all the people, we went to see the animals. There was Coco in his stable; the three fine cows—one black, one red, and one fawn-color—with their great languishing eyes and their moist, brown muzzles, quietly absorbing the great heap of cabbages put before them. I would not be satisfied until I had been lifted to the back of a little two-months-old calf, that was destined for the butcher. His departure cost me bitter tears. Then we stopped to pet brave Tom, a superb Newfoundland, three feet high, with a magnificent woolly coat, that watched the house at night. He was chained up in the daytime.

At last, after a visit to the poultry-yard, with its thirty great black chickens, pecking at their corn, and to the pond, with its tribe of noisy ducks, the rabbit-burrow, and, last of all, the humble sty, with its grunting tenant, we returned to the house for luncheon.

"To-day we will take a holiday," said Marguerite to me; "but to-morrow we must begin work in earnest."

CHAPTER IV.

MARGUERITE.

HOW can I describe all Marguerite was to me, or express the feelings which stir my soul to its inmost recesses at the thought of that sister, who was my second mother, and who loved me to the point of sacrificing the fondest desires of her heart, even life itself, in my behalf? It is exactly thirty-eight years to-day since she departed this sad life for a better world, and yet, even after so long a time, my heart still swells and my eyes fill with tears when I think of that chosen soul, who was my guardian angel here below, and who willingly endured the most cruel martyrdom that she might bring back to the path of safety her erring brother. Ah, dearest sister, I should be the most ungrateful of men if I could ever forget your tender affection and watchful care! From the realms of glory, where you now dwell, as I confidently believe, cast a look of love and pity upon your poor brother, still toiling on in this vale of tears—upon that brother who cost you so dear in days gone by. Guide him along the last stretch of the road which leads to heaven, even as you steadied his first faltering steps. Thanks to you, the faith which I lost by my sins during those evil

years when I wandered away from God, has again entered my soul, lively and pure as in those days of childhood when you first planted it there. But though my way is now lighted by the heavenly lamp, alas! I am very often unfaithful to the light, and that light, when I come to be judged, will be turned upon me, and will lay bare my sins. Do you, then, who are enjoying in Paradise that eternal youth which the flight of time cannot fade, support the poor old man who is approaching the end of his course; help him to prepare by a good death for the life which has no end, as you prepared him once with such loving care for that mortal life which opened up before him full of mystery and beset with dangers.

Here I am wrought up once more by that which is now long past and gone. Let us take up the thread of my narrative.

Marguerite was entering upon her nineteenth year when we lost our parents. The prolonged ill-health of my mother, which forced her while still very young to take upon herself the direction of the household, the many deaths in our family, and that last terrible storm which had just burst over our heads,—all these causes combined to mature at an early age the rare mental and moral qualities of this gifted child.

Her mind was quick and keen; she had a fund of common sense, and exquisite delicacy and tact, and her affection and capacity for self-sacrifice were

boundless. In addition to these natural good traits she had acquired the virtues which develop from solid and tender piety. She was patient and persevering, with the simple and open gayety of heart of a child and a modest grace which pervaded her whole person, and gave her an irresistible charm. Marguerite was, indeed, one of those chosen souls whom God leaves to bloom here on earth for a time, but whom He soon takes away, as if in haste to set them in the gardens of His Paradise. During her short sojourn here below, Marguerite exercised considerable influence on those about her. Undoubtedly her natural talents and advantages explain and justify to a certain degree the deep sympathy she inspired in those with whom she came in contact, but these qualities were trained upon a lively faith, sincere piety, and indefatigable charity, which made them meritorious and efficacious.

Marguerite's faith was part of her very being. The idea of sin, even in its lightest form, filled her with horror. One day when she was talking with the Comtesse de Saint-Julien, she allowed a somewhat disparaging remark concerning a certain person to escape her. In an instant she grew quite pale.

"Good gracious, what am I saying?" she cried. "I have given you scandal. I have done very wrong."

"Do not torment yourself about it, dear," said the Countess. "At the most it is only a venial sin."

"It may be only a venial sin, Madame," said the good child, with tears in her eyes, "but it gives me mortal pain!"

A little scene which transpired on another occasion, aptly illustrates how sensitive was her love for God and for her neighbor. As a rule, Marguerite avoided appearing in company, but on this occasion she had been obliged to make an exception and accept the Countess' invitation. There were special reasons why it was impossible to refuse. It was a great day at Aulnaie, and the most distinguished society of Angers had gathered there. The guests assembled in the great drawing-room at about four o'clock for tea. The hostess was called away for a time, and, during her absence, one of the ladies present, who bore one of the great names of France, did not scruple to introduce as a topic of conversation a scandal which had been going the rounds of the town. At first she spoke in a low tone with mysterious whispered asides to those nearest to her, but unconsciously she raised her voice as the circle of listeners widened. Soon the whole company was in wrapt attention. The smile which passed from lip to lip, the questioning expression in the eyes of the curious, the glances cast this way and that for the purpose of emphasizing allusions already perfectly transparent,—all the discreet stage business of calumny encouraged the narrator, who was keenly sensible of her triumph. Some were distressed at seeing the conversation take such a trend,

but not knowing what to do, they waited patiently for it to stop. Marguerite was worried to death. Her youth made it out of place for her to impose silence upon the malignant tongue which was busy-ing itself in wounding God's honor and its neighbor's reputation. She resolved, nevertheless, to put a stop to the scandalous proceeding, cost what it might, although she realized that she was not in conscience bound to take any steps in the matter. Just as the tale was becoming most racy, and the listeners were on the very tip-toe of expectancy and interest, she dropped the cup of tea which she held.

"O dear!" she exclaimed in a tone of distress, "my new gown is utterly ruined."

The charm was broken. Everyone gathered around her, some to console her for her mishap, others to recommend infallible recipes for removing the stain which extended all down the front of the waist. Meantime Madame de Saint-Julien reappeared, and there was no danger of a renewal of the obnoxious subject.

Marguerite soon after took her departure, and returned to Mesnil. After she left the room, old General B., quite touched, said:

"That child just now did a very brave thing. It was not awkwardness on her part which spilled the tea. I saw the whole thing. She did it on purpose, and spoiled her new dress rather than let the conversation proceed."

Every one looked at his neighbor and more than

one reddened in confusion. It was a very good lesson. I have been told that the following winter the conversation at social gatherings was more reserved than it had been, but whether the improvement was lasting or not, I do not know.

The secret of my sister's strength was her sincere and enlightened piety. She had been consecrated in infancy to the Immaculate Virgin, and, as her intelligence developed, her mother instilled in her a loving devotion to the glorious privilege of Mary. When Pius IX. solemnly defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Marguerite's devotion was wonderfully increased, and from that time she formed the habit of every morning consecrating to the Blessed Mother the day about to commence.

This devotion naturally led to love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which soon became the very soul and centre of her life. She once wrote to a friend: "The Son of God came upon earth to suffer and to love. In heaven He could only love, but not suffer. It is the same generous acceptance of suffering which He longs to find in souls, especially in those whom He has favored with special graces."

Marguerite loved our Lord with all the strength of her heart, and if her cross was a very heavy one, it was because suffering is the food of love. She received Holy Communion every morning except Tuesday, when she was accustomed to go to confession. She prepared herself for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament by a half hour's meditation,

which she made on her way to the church of Saint-Laurent. At night, before retiring, she also occupied her thoughts for a time with the Divine Guest she was so soon to receive.

Aunt Dumoulin, who was, as I have said, touched with Jansenism, could not understand her niece's devotion.

"Holy Communion every day!" she would often say, "Why, child, you must be a saint. Even the saints did not all do as much. We are not worthy to receive the Good Lord so often!"

"If I waited until I were worthy," replied Marguerite, smiling, "I would never go at all. I hope I am not *unworthy*, in the sense that I have not grave sin on my conscience, but I know very well that I do not merit so great a favor. I go so often, first, because my confessor advises me to, and, in the second place, because I know how much I need it. It is precisely so that I may become less unworthy of God that I must approach nearer to Him. I feel my own poverty and weakness, and so I have recourse to Him who is sovereignly rich and sovereignly powerful. If you do not have to receive Holy Communion so often, it is because you are better than I am."

The old lady was silent, because she did not know what to say in reply; but she renewed the attack from time to time. She even went so far on one occasion as to take to task her old friend the venerable pastor of Saint-Laurent, who had been

Marguerite's confessor from childhood. The old man listened smiling to what she had to say.

"Is it my fault," he once said in reply, "that our Lord loves Marguerite so much, and Marguerite loves our Lord so much?"

"Pshaw!" returned my aunt. "In my time things were different. The truth of the matter is the faith is being changed. That's certain. Well! It's none of my business. I will only have my own soul to account for, and that is quite enough, to be sure!"

When Aunt Catherine had relieved her mind in this fashion she would change the subject, and the peace of the family circle would be in no way disturbed.

Whoever loves God, loves his neighbor also, and Marguerite was the servant of anyone who might need her help. Her tastes, her pleasures, and her worldly interests were all sacrificed on the altar of charity. She loved and served the poor with a patience and devotion which nothing could weary. "There are," she wrote to Mademoiselle C., "two virtues which can never be carried to excess, and these are humility and charity. No matter how low a place we choose for ourselves, it can never be as low as we deserve. To realize this we need only contemplate for an instant the abasement of the Son of God. The same is true of charity, for since men are the sons and heirs of God, are we not accountable, in a certain sense, to them for all we owe to our Heavenly Father? Do what we will, we shall never be quit of that debt."

The good child was ever ready to help her neighbors in their bodily or spiritual necessities, and as she was very skilful in binding up wounds and nursing the sick, she was sent for not only from Saint-Laurent and the neighborhood, but often from great distances to perform these acts of charity. My aunt and Abbé Aubry hesitated for some time before they would consent to her giving herself up to a work which was so arduous for a young girl of her age, but when Marguerite got to be twenty years old, she was so mature in mind and vigorous in health, and her attraction to this form of charity was so evidently a supernatural gift, that her spiritual and temporal superiors were moved to allow her full freedom in the matter.

She freely availed herself of the permission, Three or four times a week, she started off right after Mass, armed with her little medicine chest, to visit the sick. She took with her Tom, the superb Newfoundland whose acquaintance we have already made. The brave dog played his part of protector in all seriousness. Woe betide the reckless individual who should threaten to do his mistress harm. His account would have been settled in short order. One afternoon at dusk, Marguerite was on her way home from one of her visits, when, at a turn in the road, two unknown men attacked her and knocked her down. Not for long, however, for at her cry of terror Tom leaped upon her assailants with such fury that one of them loosed his hold of

his victim, and the other ran off as fast as his legs could carry him. Marguerite soon recovered from her fright, and called off the dog. It was high time. The man was gasping for breath and almost choked to death.

Marguerite, rendering good for evil, hastily bound up the wounded man and took him with her to Mesnil. There she had him put to bed, and for three days she took care of him herself with great devotion. When he was able to leave, she gave him some money to help him on his way, and gently urged him to give up his evil ways and live an honest, Christian life. The poor fellow wept tears of gratitude and repentance. "Ah! Mademoiselle," said he, kissing her hand and wetting it with his tears, "you are God's own angel. I thought I had no heart left, but now it seems as if you had made me one."

After this adventure Marguerite scolded Tom for being so vicious. She even gave him several sound slaps on the head, a correction which he undoubtedly mistook for a caress. "I can see him now, submitting resignedly to his beating, gently licking meantime the hand of his mistress while he looked up at her contentedly with his great innocent yellow eyes as if to say: "Tap away, my little Marguerite, but if it were not for me where would you be now? You need not be afraid. I am always on guard."

When the trip to be made was a long one, the peasants usually came after my sister in a wagon.

They often drove ten or twelve miles. Aunt Dumoulin had once for all refused to allow Coco, our old horse, to be used for this purpose.

"I need him on the farm" said she. "Besides, it is all very well for duchesses to ride in carriages, but as for the rest of us, the Good Lord has given us legs, and He intends that we should use them."

Madame de Saint-Julien had tried to persuade Marguerite to let her give her a light wagon and a good horse.

"Obstinate child!" she wrote one day, "I shall die of anxiety if you keep up these everlasting expeditions. Suppose something dreadful should happen? You might catch some malignant disease, or be waylaid on the highway, and then what should I do? The shock would kill me. And how about Paul? Do take care of yourself, ungrateful girl, for the sake of those who love you, and stop going about the country alone. If there is no way of keeping you from your good works, at least you might take the horse and carriage that my husband and I would be so glad to give you."

Marguerite, however, was inflexible on the point in question. Nor was it the pride of the democrat—the worst pride of all—which made her refuse to receive favors from the great lady. In taking this stand she thought only of preserving her freedom of action, and of avoiding the appearance of having interested motives. Later on we shall see how prudent and meritorious was her attitude.

In the spring of 1850, Charles and his bride came to make us a little visit on their wedding tour. He had just married the daughter of a rich manufacturer of Lyons, Monsieur Robert, by name. They spent several days at the Hutterie, which, according to previous arrangement, belonged to Charles. Lucie, for this was the name of our young sister-in-law, was a lovely character, very gentle and kind-hearted, and very pious, and was delighted to make the acquaintance of Marguerite, for whom, from that time forward, she cherished the tenderest affection. Her own fortune was considerable, and her father gave her all the money she wanted, so, of her own accord, she asked her husband to transfer the family property to his sister—a request which my brother was very ready to grant. Marguerite, after some hesitation, ended in accepting their proposition on my account. It was decided that she should lay aside the modest revenues of the Hutterie to defray the future expenses of my education. Charles and Lucie left us at the end of a week, promising to return before long, a prospect to which I looked forward with delight, for Lucie had loaded me with presents, and I thought, with good reason, that the source of her liberality was not likely to be exhausted. Marguerite, fortunately, put a stop to all this, otherwise Lucie would certainly have spoiled me. At the time I would, without doubt, have enjoyed it, but later I understood that a wise move had been made in setting a limit to my new sister's generosity.

"I am going to send you a present, too, before long," Lucie said to Marguerite when she bade her good-by. A few days later the present arrived in the shape of a fine English phaeton and a beautiful little horse, who could go like the wind. Marguerite received gratefully from her sister that which she did not think it advisable to accept from an outsider, and she was thenceforth able to give free rein to her charitable impulses, and was also saved much fatigue and many inconveniences.

I was not less delighted than Marguerite, for Fanfan (as we called our little steed) was a handsome creature, as black as jet, very gentle, perfectly trained, with no tricks and yet full of vigor and fire. Besides, Marguerite, yielding to my entreaties, consented after a little hesitation, to my riding him, though I was then only eight years old. Lexis, the farm boy, was charged with looking after me when his duties permitted, and, moreover, my sister was somewhat reassured as to the probable falls of the horseman when she realized the small size of his mount. Thus it was that I was enabled, much to my satisfaction, to learn to ride and to make delightful expeditions into the surrounding country, which served greatly to improve my health.

At first I used our little horse without any regard for moderation, being carried away by my love of all out-door amusements. But this did not accord at all with Marguerite's ideas. She was too gentle and tender-hearted not to be considerate of even the

dumb animals. She would have had a perfect right to forbid my using Fanfan without her express permission, but she had in view not only the preservation of the horse's usefulness, but more especially the correction of a fault which, if allowed to develop in a character as ardent and passionate as mine, might easily have made me unfeeling and cruel.¹

One day Marguerite returned from a long trip with Fanfan well tired out and covered with foam. Without regard to the exhausted condition of the poor horse, I jumped at once into the saddle and started off for a ride. Marguerite had gone up to her room, and saw me from the window. She came down directly and ordered Alexis to go and tell me to come back. I came tearing up the avenue at a gallop, proud of my progress in the equestrian art and expecting to be complimented. Guitte's face, however, was very grave.

"Are you not ashamed," she said, "to make a tired animal race like that? I thought you had more feeling."

I was quite taken aback, but I was also vexed at being scolded in the presence of Lexis and Cillette, who were witnesses to the scene, and I answered in a somewhat impudent tone that Charles and

¹ Mme. X. had acquired, justly or unjustly, the reputation of being hard on her servants, and her maid said one day to Cillette: "Is your young lady cross?" "Cross!" cried the girl indignantly. "Whoever told you such a horrible thing as that? Why, our mistress never in all her life gave any one the least trouble. She couldn't even say 'no' to a sheep!"

Lucie had given Fanfan to me as well as to her. Marguerite shrugged her shoulders.

"You are only aggravating your fault," said she. "At first it was only thoughtlessness, but now it is pride as well. Get down," she added, sternly; and when I had obeyed, she continued: "Lexis, take the poor beast to the stable and look after him."

When the boy had taken Fanfan away, Marguerite pulled me down beside her and said, gently: "It was my duty to teach you this lesson, Paul dear, and you hurt me by taking it so badly."

But I was already choked up with tears, and putting my arms around Guitte's neck, I asked her pardon. How could I have spoken so rudely and ungratefully, when I loved her so much? I was already forgiven.

"And now that you are all right again," she said, "you can understand better how wrong you were a moment ago in using the horse when he was in such a state. That is not making a proper use of creatures. The good Lord gives them to us for our necessities and also for our enjoyment, but we must make use of them in moderation, and that is not what you were doing a while ago in mounting that poor beast when he was already worn out by my long ride. It was not a sin, I know, but it was an unreasonable act; first, because you might have caused injury to ourselves by rendering the animal useless, and this would be the more serious because our means do not admit of our buying another

horse so easily—and you know how useful Fanfan is to me—but there is another and a better reason. If you get into the habit of being hard and cruel to animals simply for your own amusement, you will, little by little, increase your selfishness and your violent desire of having your own way in everything, and you will soon end in being hard and unfeeling towards human beings, too, which would be a great misfortune. I would not have used the horse so hard myself to-day, if it had not been necessary. My object was the health, perhaps even the life, of a certain person. In such a case one must remember that the beasts are made for man, and it would then be ridiculous and even reprehensible to spare them.”

I learned my lesson, and my sister was under no necessity of repeating it. I have always been grateful to her for having taught me to be merciful to animals. She added example to precept, and I have known her more than once to undertake a long trip on foot, in order to spare her tired horse. But on several occasions, when her services were demanded by some one seriously ill and living at a distance, she did not hesitate to make the journey at top speed, urging poor Fanfan on relentlessly, although, as she said, “it made her heart bleed.” One day when there was question of bringing the consolations of religion to a dying man whom she had just persuaded to see a priest, she started off in the phaeton at break-neck pace to fetch the pastor, who

lived more than twelve miles away, and made the distance going and coming in an hour and twenty-five minutes. She had the satisfaction of arriving in time and of seeing the sick man die in peace, reconciled to his God; but she had been obliged to press her horse so hard that he dropped as if shot, when the drive was over. The tears came to poor Marguerite's eyes at the sight. "What a shame to have to strike the poor animal so!" she said, that evening. "It cost me a great deal to do it, but I hope it was pleasing in the sight of God, since it was to save a soul."

Thanks to our good care, Fanfan recovered, and at the end of a few weeks, more lively and spirited than ever, he resumed his labors, which, as a general rule, were light enough.

If an epidemic was raging in the neighborhood, my sister was not satisfied with visiting the sick three or four times a week. She worked night and day in their service, hardly taking time for her meals. My aunt at first attempted to restrain her zeal, but she ended by yielding, overcome by the sight of so much devotion. In 1853, during the epidemic of typhoid fever which ravaged the town of Angers, she offered her services to the superior of the Sisters in charge of the town hospital, who was only too grateful for her assistance. For five weeks she rivaled in devotion and self-sacrifice the religious themselves, never faltering in the face of fatigue, or of the most revolting offices of the sick-

room. When the scourge had disappeared, and Marguerite went to take leave of the superior, the latter said to her: "My child, why not remain with us? It certainly would seem to be your vocation, for I have never seen a more courageous and skilful sick-nurse." "Perhaps the day may come when I can, Mother," replied Marguerite, "but for the present, God has marked out my task. I must be father and mother to my brother. Paul is only ten years old, and I am the only one in the world to look after his soul. When that task is done, I will come, God willing, and live and die with you in the service of the unfortunate." Old Rose never ceased her lamentations and pathetic appeals, in which she protested against Marguerite's being at every one's beck and call. Many a time did she turn away the peasants who came in quest of her young mistress's assistance! But the dear girl generally arrived on the scene in time to set things straight, and never allowed the poor people to go away without promising soon to go and see them.

They would almost always send for Marguerite when some one dangerously ill refused the consolations of religion. "We'll have to get Mamzelle to make him hear reason," the good country people would say. "An angel of God she is! And who could say no to her?"

The pastors themselves often asked her to prepare the way for them, and persuade the sick to receive a visit from the priest.

Marguerite, after preparing herself by praying fervently, would set out without more ado to seek this interview upon which, in many cases, the salvation of a soul depended. In almost every instance her presence brought about the desired result, and the sick person, thanking her with all his heart, would ask her to prepare him for the reception of the Sacraments. She had such a simple, touching way of speaking of the happiness of heaven, the divine justice and the sufferings of our Lord, and God gave such power to her words that hardened sinners listening to her would come to hate their sins and die with the most edifying dispositions.

Her gentle influence spread more and more, and people came from a great distance to see her, and asked either personally or by letter for advice, encouragement or the assistance of her prayers; for though she possessed wonderful skill in nursing the sick and dressing wounds, God had bestowed upon her a gift even more precious than this; that of consoling afflicted souls by helping them to bear their crosses. Many a broken heart appealed to her, and never in vain.

At about nine o'clock one winter evening during a period of very cold weather, a messenger arrived from Angers with a note for Marguerite. He came in an open vehicle. In a note a friend informed her that Madame N., a young woman of Angers who had been married but two months, had just lost her husband. He had died a few hours before as the

result of an accident while out hunting. Brought up in the midst of worldly surroundings, she was ignorant of even the fundamental truths of religion, and had never made her First Communion. For two or three weeks past, however, as a consequence of several interviews with Marguerite, brought about by a common friend, she had begun to think seriously of her duty towards God. She had often expressed great admiration and affection for my sister, and there was every reason to hope that under this favorable influence she would in time correspond to grace. But now this awful calamity, which struck her to the very heart, made her revolt against God, and at almost every instant she gave expression to the most horrible blasphemy. All the ground that had been gained seemed lost.

"I do not wish to see a living soul," she cried out, in a paroxysm of impious rage. "But yes—there is one Being I wish to face and that is God, if there be a God. I long to appear before Him, so that I may curse Him and defy His anger. Leave me alone! Let me alone to die!"

The unfortunate creature's violence was so excessive that it was feared she would take her own life.

"There is one person whom you certainly would not refuse to see," some one said to her during an interval of comparative quiet.

"Whom do you mean?" she answered listlessly.

"Mademoiselle Leclère."

"She . . . yes, perhaps," she murmured as if talking to herself, then added regretfully: "But what is the use of mentioning her? She is not here."

The devoted friend had so much sympathy for her that she immediately sent off a messenger to Mesnil describing the situation to Marguerite, and asking her to return with the messenger if she possibly could, and if not to send an answer. Marguerite took up her pen, and then, after a moment, "Better go at once," said she, and she went down to the kitchen, where the messenger was warming his benumbed members by the fire.

"I will go back with you, and spend the night with the ladies," she said.

"On such a night as this!" cried old Rose, quite beside herself. "Go out in weather like this and in an open wagon, too! You shall not, Mamzelle, I forbid you! And you, man," she continued, turning to the messenger, "will please to go right off, and not let that child do any such foolish thing."

"At least wait till morning, Mamzelle," said poor Cillette appealingly, "it is cold enough to freeze the wine in the bottom of the cellar."

"True enough," mournfully added Lexis.

Marguerite smiled. "Wait here for me," she said decidedly.

Returning to her room she wrapped herself up in a long cloak and covered her face with a sort of mask which in Anjou they call a "passe-montagne." Two

minutes later she was speeding along the road to Angers at a round pace, leaving old Rose furious and her body-guard of two inconsolable. Poor Cillette was so grieved at the idea of her dear mistress being exposed to the bitter cold, that she would not go to bed, and wept all night, sitting by the fire. Old Rose kept her company. As for Lexis, either he was not so soft-hearted or he was more of a philosopher, for he soon went off to bed.

Aunt Catherine had heard none of the commotion, for she had been asleep and snoring ever since eight o'clock. I had been aroused for an instant by the sound of carriage wheels on the gravel, but I had thought nothing of it, and two seconds later I was sound asleep. Happy age! I could not do the same now!

The good Lord blessed Marguerite's act of charity. When she appeared at about midnight, Madame N. could hardly believe her eyes. But it was really Marguerite, and she had come all that distance, in an open vehicle, in the middle of the night, with the thermometer at zero, for the sole purpose of comforting her in her affliction. She was very much touched.

"You, Marguerite! In this terrible cold! You might have caught your death!"

"I would be willing to do that over and over again," replied my sister, gently.

"You would? But why?"

"For the good of your soul," said my sister, looking up at her poor friend with ineffable love and tenderness.

Madame N—— was conquered. She and Marguerite talked together the rest of the night, and when my sister took leave of her she was peaceful and resigned. Her heart was won, and it was not long before her mind also assented. A few days later Madame N—— made her confession, and she and Marguerite, who had prepared her, received Holy Communion side by side.

Women of all ages and of every rank and condition held my sister in affectionate esteem, and counted her friendship as a very special favor. She received at least ten or twelve letters every morning, and they were all answered by night. Yet Marguerite found time to devote two or three hours a day to teaching me. It is true that her mind was quick and precise, and this enabled her to dispose of a great deal of work in a short time. She rose very early, and went to bed very late, and thus stole many an hour from her night's rest. At her age a certain amount of sleep is very necessary, and yet for a long time her health continued to be vigorous and unimpaired. But the holy excesses of her charity in the end gradually but surely broke down her physique and exhausted her vitality before her time. Alas! Why do I reproach my neighbor for abusing the willingness of that generous soul? It was I who killed her by my unfaithfulness, and I owe the salvation of my soul to the sacrifice of her life and of her earthly happiness.

Marguerite disposed the hours of her day in such

a manner as to find time for all her numerous occupations. She rose at five o'clock, winter and summer, and soon after started for the church of Saint-Laurent, about a mile and a half away. She always walked and took old Tom as escort, and on the way she made her meditation in preparation for Holy Communion. Her dog, faithful to his charge, gravely waited for her at the door of the church, and gave lively evidence of his joy when she reappeared. After the six o'clock Mass, which was said by Father Berteaux, the first assistant, she took a light breakfast at the house of a friend, and then set out again for Mesnil. By half-past seven she had reached her home again, and she then made ready to go to visit her sick people. Three days in the week—Monday, Wednesday and Friday—were devoted to these visits, which usually consumed the entire morning. She nearly always walked when visiting those in the neighborhood; but if the way was long, she had the horse made ready and she then started about eight o'clock. Fanfan flew along at a great pace, proud and glad to carry his dear mistress. When her clients lived in places which were inaccessible to wagons, Marguerite would leave her light conveyance in a lane or at a siding in the road in the care of her Guardian Angel, and taking a little English saddle from the bottom of the wagon, would saddle Fanfan in no time, and pursue her way on horseback. She was light as a feather, and her horse, hardly feeling her weight, galloped freely and

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airily along the verdant foot-paths. If there was a hollow or a deep ravine to be crossed, where the way was too rough for riding, Marguerite would dismount and proceed on foot, the docile animal following her like a faithful dog, and never needing a touch of whip or rein to make him obey. After making her visit she would return in the same manner to the place where she had left the phaeton; and the Guardian Angel must have watched well, for she always found it safe. Unless something unforeseen occurred, the stroke of noon always found her at Mesnil once more, for Aunt Dumoulin insisted on promptness.

When Marguerite made her charitable rounds alone, I went with my aunt out hunting, or to visit the farm, according to the time of year, so I was never left to myself in the morning.

The days my sister remained at home (that is to say, generally speaking, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays), she gave herself up to her studies, of which she was passionately fond. She read with keen enjoyment our great classic writers and the best among the moderns. She knew Latin well enough to read works in that language with ease, she spoke German and English fluently, and had an extensive knowledge of history. In order to study more intelligently Catholic ethics and dogma, she had made herself acquainted with the elements of scholastic philosophy. She had an unusually bright mind, which, served well by her determined

will, infallible memory and wonderful facility for assimilation, enabled her to make very rapid progress in a short space of time and in studies which were as varied as they were serious. She reserved to herself only two hours three times a week (from eight to ten in the morning) for her particular work, and even then she had one eye upon my school-boy tasks, which I accomplished after a fashion at her side. At ten o'clock we went for a little walk in the neighborhood. Marguerite moved along, quiet and collected, a pious book or her beads in her hand, while I on Fanfan's back cut up all sorts of capers around her. At about eleven o'clock we went in again, and I sat down at the piano to practise. Marguerite was a very good musician herself, and had undertaken to instill in me her taste and talent for music, but she only half succeeded. Out-of-door sports were much more to my taste, and I would have given all the pianos in the world for a saddle-horse, a hunting dog and a gun. Until Charles' marriage my sister had only had at her disposal an old worn-out harpsichord which had belonged to my mother. The poor child, who was a real artist, had, as I afterwards learned, suffered much on account of the inadequacy of her instrument; but the money she was able to save was far too valuable for her even to think of spending it on herself. She intended to use it, as I think I have said, for my education and the necessities of her dear poor people. The good Lord rewarded her self-denial. On the occasion of her first

visit to us when she was on her wedding-trip, Lucie, Charles' wife, who also played very well, had listened with admiration to the performance of her sister-in-law.

"How can you, my dear girl," she said to her one day, "with talent such as yours, put up with such an old tin-pan as that?"

"Oh!" replied Marguerite, "it is quite good enough for me."

Lucie did not insist, but I could see very well that she had some scheme in her mind. A few days after the arrival of Fanfan, an enormous crate, packed with every imaginable precaution, made its appearance. It was the *second volume* of our wedding presents. We had to send for the cabinet-maker from Saint-Laurent to come and open the mysterious case, which disclosed before the dazzled eyes of the inhabitants of Mesnil, a magnificent Érard Grand. Marguerite, flushed with pleasure, made no attempt to hide her satisfaction. She had the piano put in her room, which was very large, and that very evening Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin and Mendelssohn sounded as they never had before. The "tin-pan" was reserved for my practising, and verily the instrument was worthy of the performer.

But to return to the ordering of our days. After dinner and a short recreation, Marguerite gathered together about twelve of the children of the neighborhood whom she was preparing for their first Holy Communion. This catechism class, which met three

times a week, lasted two hours. I was always present as well as Lexis and Cillette, whose religious instructions had been very much neglected. Marguerite put her whole heart in this work, and went about it as if were the most important business in the world, and in this I believe she was not altogether wrong. She excelled in holding the attention of her young hearers, ordinarily so restless and trifling, by pointed questions, short and simple explanations, apt and striking illustrations which were easily remembered. She taught the children their prayers and how to examine their consciences, and spoke to them of sin and its horror and of the severity with which God punished it. There were some among them who were naturally apathetic and dull, and she often had the mortification of receiving hopelessly stupid answers to her questions. Any ordinary amount of patience would soon have been exhausted, but she returned to the attack without permitting herself to be discouraged, and in the end overcame both stupidity and lack of attention. Many a time have I seen her after supper take aside Lexis and Cillette, our two young servants, who were good-hearted, I must admit, but almost inconceivably stupid. It took a long time to get them to learn even that which their limited understanding permitted them to grasp, but Marguerite succeeded in getting into their heads the absolutely essential truths, and at last the poor things could receive Holy Communion, from which they had been barred on account of their extreme ignorance.

On the days when she did not have catechism, my sister was occupied with her sewing or embroidery until half-past two. As she had no maid she kept her own clothes and mine in order, and it may be imagined that I gave her some work to do! The poor girl had often to sit up late mending the rents in my clothes which would result from my expeditions into the woods.

At half-past two I began my studies every day, and these also Marguerite superintended.¹ She taught me until I was thirteen years old, and could have done so much longer, had it not been that about that time I became very hard to govern. Although I loved my sister dearly, I would not submit without a struggle to the authority of a woman. I argued, and refused to obey, and often there were very lively scenes. I always asked her pardon afterwards, with all my heart, when I had quieted down, but the relapses were altogether too frequent. A change of air became imperative. Then, too, Marguerite realized that except under very unusual circumstances the education of a boy should be conducted by men. And so in the beginning of October, 1854, I was sent to college to begin with the third class. I was at that time thirteen years old,—but we have not come to that quite yet.

At four o'clock lessons were over, and I ran out joyfully to work in my little garden until the supper

¹ Before beginning we always said a prayer before the picture of father and mother, and asked them to bless us.

bell rang. My aunt had generously given up to me quite a space in her vegetable garden. Of this plot I was absolute master, and the Lord only knows what childish experiments I tried there!

During this time Marguerite walked to church to make her daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament. She remained there half an hour and on her return she practised on the piano until supper.

After that we had a short recreation, and then I said my prayers, and when I was in bed and sound asleep, which as a general thing was before very long, Marguerite went back to her room to attend to her correspondence and her own devotions. It was not until half-past ten that she sought her night's repose.

This was the routine of the week. We spent almost the whole of Sunday at Saint-Laurent, taking our breakfast there with friends. Between High Mass and Vespers, Marguerite called a meeting of the Children of Mary of the parish. Year after year they elected her president unanimously, except, of course, for one vote. She gave them a short instruction on the love and honor due to their Blessed Mother and urged them faithfully and generously to discharge the duties of their state. On the eves of the great feasts they met in the sacristy for the purpose of preparing the decorations of the altar. For a whole week before Corpus Christi they would be busy from morning until night decorating the "calvaries" erected along the highways of the parish.

While they were thus occupied with the visible accessories of worship, Marguerite lost no opportunity of speaking with them about God, and of helping them to prepare to receive the Holy Eucharist.

All these young girls were devoted to their president, and not one of them would decide a question of importance without first asking her advice and the assistance of her prayers. Marguerite used this influence to counteract the faults and vices of the young people of the district. She managed to inspire in those about her such a horror of sin and such love of the angelic virtue that in the course of a few months, the dances and gatherings of the free and boisterous sort, and, in fact, all other dangerous amusements had quite disappeared from the parish. The improvement was so marked that it almost seemed miraculous, and the pastor and his assistants thanked God for it, and did not hesitate to say to people that Mademoiselle Leclère was the visible angel of Saint-Laurent.

The general affection and respect in which she was held was strikingly manifested during the winter of 1854. Marguerite took cold as a result of visiting a sick person, who lived at a great distance from Mesnil. She went out of a very warm room into the open air, and she was chilled through when she got into the phaeton again. By the time she got home an hour later, she was in a raging fever and had a pain in her right side. Next day our good doctor pronounced it pneumonia, and almost immediately the disease assumed a very alarming character.

It would be impossible to describe the anxiety of the parish and all the surrounding country at this time. People came eighteen and twenty miles to ask about Marguerite. The Countess de Saint-Julien sent a servant every morning and evening to inquire, and came every day to acquaint herself "de visu" of the condition of her dear Marguerite. In every household prayers were said, asking God to preserve the "saint," and many people made a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Help at Nantes, to obtain the cure of the "good young lady." The young girls of Saint-Laurent got permission from the pastor to pray day and night before the Blessed Sacrament until Marguerite should be pronounced out of danger. A number of others did the same, so there was always a crowd in the church. But most pathetic of all was the grief of our good-hearted domestics. Old Rose sobbed from morning until night, repeating to every one who came near her that she would not live without her little Marguerite. Lexis and Cillette were in consternation; and no wonder, for Marguerite was so good to them! Poor Cillette in particular was pitiful to behold. At the most dangerous stage of my sister's illness, she promised the good Lord in simple faith and courage that she would not taste a bit of food until her dear mistress should be cured. She kept her vow, and went four days without eating or drinking. We only learned afterwards, through a slip on the part of Lexis, of the heroic resolution of his sister.

My aunt, who loved us like a mother, although her affection was hidden under a rather gruff exterior, was a marvel of efficiency and devotion. She refused to send for a Sister of Charity, as the doctor suggested, and, in spite of her old age, she tended my sister herself, day and night, during the entire course of her illness.

"She is a real Marguerite, that's sure," said the poor old lady to Abbé Aubry, and a Vendéan, too! I know the good Lord would like to have her in Paradise, but, all the same, we want her here, too, at least until we die ourselves; don't we, Father? And we'll just work so hard that the good Lord will change His mind."

The good priest smiled, and wept, and prayed with all his heart, for he loved Marguerite with all the affection of a father. Had he not baptized her, given her her First Communion, and been her director from her childhood? Then, too, he realized what a loss the death of this dear child would be to his parish.

"If I were only at liberty to speak," he said to us one day, when our anxiety was greatest, "if I might tell you of what goes on in that dear soul and brave heart which I know so well—but it is God's secret; we shall know it all some day, and praise Him for it in eternity."

Marguerite prepared for death with perfect resignation and calmness. She had Charles and Lucie notified to come at once, if they wished to see her

alive, and when they arrived she confided me to their care, begging them to adopt me as their son, which they willingly promised to do. She then nerved herself to try and quiet the violence of my grief, and urged me to prepare myself well for my First Communion, which I was to make a few months later. She succeeded in calming me, and after that, kept her thoughts fixed on God, before whom, as she believed, she was soon to appear.

She asked that the doors of her room be opened wide and every one be admitted who was on the place at the time. She then asked pardon for all the evil she had done and the good she had omitted, and begged them to pray for her and help her to prepare for God's judgment. All present were in tears. After this Marguerite, with a lively faith, received Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, and then she bade everyone farewell.

Hardly were the ceremonies at an end, when the sick girl fell into a deep sleep which lasted all the afternoon and through the night. When she awoke, she declared that she was well, and the doctor, arriving at that moment, found, to his great satisfaction, that the affected lung was entirely healed.

And so Marguerite was given back to us, and her cure was really miraculous, for from that very day all the symptoms of her illness disappeared. She got up, took some food, and went on foot to Saint-Laurent to give thanks to our Lord for having given back to her again the robust health which she had enjoyed up to that time.

There was a day of general rejoicing when it became known that the "young lady of Mesnil" was well again. We had to rescue her by force from all these good people, who would have quite overwhelmed her with their joyful demonstrations.

In the midst of this unanimous chorus of praise and fond admiration, my sister remained ever insignificant and despised in her own eyes, and I learned later that God preserved the tender flower of her humility by interior trials from which she was never more to be relieved. I will revert to this in time.

Marguerite looked upon my bringing up as her first duty. She was untiring in her efforts to give me a broad and solid education and to furnish my mind by degrees with a fund of varied and useful knowledge; but above all she strove to develop my understanding and to confirm my will in reasonable habits, and especially to plant in my heart an active and lively piety, to accomplish which last the generosity and constancy of the will are necessary. She knew well how, with God's help, to make of me a man of fine feeling and a true Christian.

At my lessons, during our walks, or in those long talks when I confidingly poured all the thoughts and imaginings of my childish heart into her willing ears, she seized upon every opportunity of teaching me to know God, the Creator and Ruler of all things, and also to fear Him and to love Him. From my earliest years she had instructed me in the fundamental truths of religion, the smaller catechism, Bible his-

tory, and, as I grew older, the history of the Church. She showed me the power and goodness of God as revealed in the material universe, and still more in that hidden world, the soul, and she accustomed me to look upon mortal sin as the great evil, because it outrages the Divine Majesty, and inflicts death upon the soul, as incalculable woe, as the supreme act of madness, as a deplorable state from which one must extricate himself at any cost, if he be so unhappy as to fall therein.

Marguerite sought to arouse in me admiration for all that is noble and generous, and, on the other hand, contempt for what is low, for lying, hypocrisy, selfish or interested motives; contempt for riches and the good things of this world, which attach the soul to earth with such strong bonds; contempt for the opinion of the world, and love of duty—in short, the principles of Christian education epitomized in that ancient device of our forefathers: “Do what you ought, come what may.”¹

Alas! I did not profit by these precious lessons, and while she was here on earth, my poor Marguerite, during my young manhood, saw with sorrow thorns and tares spring up and flourish abundantly in the field cultivated with such loving care. May she from above behold at last, in the ground so long ungrateful and sterile, the growth of that late-blooming flower called repentance, a poor blossom without brightness or beauty in the eyes of the world, but

¹ “Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra.”

pleasing, nevertheless, in God's sight. "There shall be joy in heaven," says the Gospel, "upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just that need not penance."

There are some well-known lines of Paul Reynier :

"La plus pure des fleurs qui croissent dans nos fanges,
C'est lui (le repentir); mais l'innocence est la vertu des
anges,

La fleur qui ne germe qu'au ciel."¹

These verses remind me of part of a simple old song which I learned in my childhood:

Au beau séjour de Paradis
Le bon Jésus, notre doux sire,
Parmi les roses et les lis
Sourit au parfum de la myrrhe.²

It is very comforting for poor sinners!

Marguerite also began very early to teach me the history of France, and inspired in me a deep love of my country. She showed me how the Hand of God led our land in her glorious career, and made her the defender of the Church, the terror of tyrants and the refuge of the oppressed. When the world lent itself to an act of infamy, the sword of France leapt flam-

¹ Paul Reynier, "Innocence et Repentir."

The purest of flowers in this earthly soil grown
Is repentance: innocence blooms in heaven alone,
'Tis the virtue of angels above.

² Heaven is a garden wondrous fair,
Where lilies and where roses bloom,
Our gentle Saviour, walking there,
Smiles at the bitter myrrh's perfume.

ing from its sheath, and French blood was gladly and proudly shed in the vindication of justice. "France will avenge us!" oppressed peoples would cry, and they looked to us for aid.

But to-day, what a contrast! We stand by and watch unmoved the death agony of a generous people, devoured by a nation which covets the precious metals and diamonds of its mountains. This people is of our own flesh and blood, and calls loudly upon us for aid. And France sleeps! She sleeps supinely, and "felons" prevent her from being roused, in order that the civilized robbers may accomplish their ends unmolested. How long, O God! Shall we see the great nation awake once more?

But we are away back in 1852, and as yet I am a man only nine years old.

If Marguerite was quite satisfied with my conduct, she took me with her when she went to visit the sick, providing there was no danger of my being exposed to some contagious disease. I was still altogether a child, and it took so little to make me happy!

For me there was nothing so enjoyable as these little excursions; and Marguerite liked very much to take me with her, both as a reward and also as a means of accustoming me to being with the poor and to the practice of charity. She often found occasion when I accompanied her in these drives to follow up her task of developing the powers of my mind and heart.

Once a month during the warm weather, the recreation would last all day. Then there would be no visits, but the whole time would be given up to me, and Marguerite would exercise her ingenuity in making me happy. Long before I looked forward to those days with delight, first, because for me my sister and the pleasure of being with her represented the very acme of my desires. And then our outings were so enjoyable! On these days Marguerite would have the horse and phaeton brought around as soon as she returned from Mass. Old Rose would pack the bottom of the wagon with her choicest provisions, —a fine roast chicken, a sealed jar of cream, some luscious peaches and delicious little cakes which she had baked with special care. She did not forget to include a good bag of oats for Fanfan and a dinner for brave Tom, who was always of the party.

We all four set off in high spirits, Tom barking, Fanfan frisky, I myself shouting and singing and Marguerite laughing. I shall never forget those times. Fanfan went like a deer, with such fire and vigor at a pace of fifteen miles an hour. When he was not urged —and he never was except in extraordinary cases—he could go at that rate for a long time without showing the slightest sign of fatigue or turning a hair. It is true that our vehicle was extremely light, and Marguerite and I added very little to its weight. The heaviest burden that Fanfan had to draw was undoubtedly old Tom, who, after following for a few miles would come up with a be-

seeching look which meant that he wanted a lift. "Jump, Tom!" He did not wait to be told twice, but leaped in without more ado, and soberly laid himself down at our feet.

We stopped once in a while to breathe our valiant little steed and admire at leisure the beautiful country through which we were passing. About noon we looked about for a grassy meadow near a pretty stream where there was pleasant shade, and there we alighted and prepared for our luncheon. Marguerite laid the cloth upon a fresh green carpet of moss, while I unhitched Fanfan, who proceeded to make a plentiful meal of the flower-strewn grass. He never was tied, for we knew he would run up at the first call, his mane floating, his eye on fire, his nostrils distended in the wind. It was a pleasure to see him, so spirited, so vigorous and, at the same time, so gentle and tractable. As for Tom, after playing for a few minutes with his friend Fanfan, by way, I suppose, of thanking him for his ride, he would come and sit at our feet, and gravely munch the chicken bones which we threw him. After luncheon, while I slept on the turf in the shade, Marguerite said her beads and many other prayers. When I awoke we talked together for a good portion of the afternoon. She spoke to me of God, of His power and goodness, so wonderfully shown forth in this our fair land of Anjou. She could, without wearying me, direct my thoughts to infinite perfection, the inexhaustible source of all earthly beauty, which reflected for our

eyes increate intelligence, as the stream reminds us of its source, or the sunbeam of the luminous orb whence it emanates.

I asked her innocently one day, whether Anjou were not the most beautiful country in the world. "For us it is," she said, smiling, and she repeated the well-known sonnet of Joachim de Bellay, who, in the midst of the magnificence of Rome, poetically sighed for his native land. These are, I believe, the first verses I ever learned by heart, and it always gives me pleasure to recall them.

"Plus me plaist le séjour qu'on bâti mes ayeulx
Que des palais romains, le front audacieux;
Plus que le marbre dur me plaist l'ardoise fine;

"Plus mon Loyre gaulois que le Tybre latin,
Plus mon petit Lyré que le mont Palatin
Et plus que l'air marin la douceur Angevine."¹

About four o'clock Marguerite gave the signal for departure. At our call Fanfan came up ready to be harnessed. I took the good oats from the bottom of the wagon, and he munched them with his strong teeth, finding in them new strength. Then we got into the phaeton and started for home at the same lively pace as in the morning. We reached Mesnil again at about seven o'clock.

¹ "Within the home my fathers reared to live
All Rome's pretentious palaces I'd give,
Their marble for our slate so fine and blue.

"To my French Loire the Latin Tiber's tame,
Lyré can put the Palatine to shame,
And the salt air is harsh to the soft breezes of Anjou."

I believe I have never tasted sweeter pleasures, pleasures which left behind them less remorse, than those charming excursions when I was alone with my earthly angel under God's fair heaven.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEVIL'S POOL.

NEEDLESS to say, it was with the greatest care that I was prepared to receive the Sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist. Keenly alive to the importance of this great act, Marguerite left nothing undone which could serve to dispose my soul for the visit of our Lord, especially during the months just previous to the event, when her efforts were redoubled. I approached the Holy Table for the first time in 1852, on the Feast of Pentecost, which fell that year on the third of June, an ever memorable date for me. This signal favor made the more profound impression upon me, because, a few hours before, I had narrowly escaped death. I shall briefly narrate this incident.

My sister and I had been at Saint-Laurent for three days, making the preparatory retreat. On the evening of the second of June, after hearing the afternoon instruction and going to confession, I returned to Mesnil with Marguerite, who had remained in the church waiting for me. We were both very much affected and very happy—so happy that we found no words in which to express our feelings, and we walked half way in silence. I shall never

forget the sense of profound and soothing peace which pervaded my mind and heart that evening. Marguerite did not disturb my recollection. She herself seemed to experience great interior joy. We were very far from foreseeing the scene of excitement in which we were to be the actors an hour later.

As we drew near Mesnil, I said in a low tone to my sister: "Guitte, is it true what the Father said this morning that there are children who offend the good Lord again after their first Holy Communion?"

Marguerite smiled. "It is true, Paul, dear," she said; "but it is because they do not pray as they should. If you are faithful to your prayers you will never displease Him again, at least not in a grave matter."

"Guitte," I said again, "suppose I should ask our Lord to let me die now sooner than risk losing my soul by living any longer?"

"Ask Him, if you wish," she replied, "Our good Jesus will surely be pleased with that prayer."

I ran at once toward a calvary set up by the roadside, and kneeling before the sign of our Redemption, I asked God not to let me live if I were going to make use of my life only to lose my soul.

We continued on our way, talking together of the Heavenly Guest who was so soon to take up His abode in my heart.

I would willingly have remained with Marguerite

the rest of the day, talking about God. When we reached home (it was then about five o'clock), I asked her to stay with me until supper time.

"I would like to very much, dear boy," she said. "To-day especially. Nothing would please me better than to be with you, but I must go and see poor Madame Heurteaux of La Sorinière, who is still very sick. I do not want to leave you to-morrow, so I must go there now."

Cillette passed the window just then, and Marguerite called to her: "Go and tell your brother to saddle Fanfan and bring him round to me at once."

"What!" I said, somewhat surprised, "are you going on horseback this time?"

"Yes," she answered. "La Sorinière is five miles away, and I am a little tired with all the walking I have done already, and, besides, I want to get back soon."

"Well," said I, "I will go as far as the Gemme with you and then come home and wait. Don't be long, for I have so many things to tell you about."

"Fanfan has swift feet," she answered. "He has had nothing to do for five or six days, and he will fly like a swallow. In fifty minutes at the least I shall be back."

We started about half-past five o'clock down the long avenue of chestnut trees, which extended as far as the meadows bordering the Gemme. I think I have already said that this river was only about fifteen hundred yards from Mesnil. Fanfan, sad-

dled and bridled, followed us, playing in the deep grass. Unmoved by his plaintive whining we had left Tom tied in his corner, which was an unusual proceeding, but I wanted to avoid any occasion of distraction which might result from romping too boisterously with my old friend.

Arrived at the end of the avenue, we noticed that some one had left open the gate which separated the property from the commons. "Let's shut the gate," said Marguerite, "or else the cows and sheep will be running all over the place."

It was an oak affair, about six feet high, which was fastened by means of a padlock. When we had closed it, I said, laughing: "Now, you will have to dismount, on your way back, and open it again; unless you make Fanfan take the leap."

"No indeed!" said she. "I have no desire to practise high-jumping."

A few minutes later we had crossed the meadows, and reached the river bank, which in this place was quite steep and rocky. We stood just above a sudden decided deepening in the bed of the stream, a sort of open hole about thirty feet down, called by the country-folk the "Devil's Pool." The Gemme, up to that point very rapid, flows more quietly opposite Mesnil, for the course of the river here changes abruptly from north to west, and the bank itself opposes an obstacle to the swiftness of the current. It is the most dangerous place along the river, for the current, suddenly broken, here produces a

violent whirlpool. Many accidents had taken place here. Two children about my age had been drowned a few days before.

"Go back to the house now," Marguerite said to me; "don't stay here by yourself; you know how afraid I am of this place."

"Don't worry about me," I answered. "I am not going to drown myself to-day. I just want to get you a little bunch of those lovely white flowers. They are just meant for you. I can easily reach them."

As I spoke, I ran to the very edge of the bank, and began to pick the flowers which had excited my desire. My feet rested for an instant on the top of the rock which overhung the Devil's Pool.

"Come back, Paul," called Marguerite. "Don't stand there! Do be careful!"

"Be easy," I replied gaily. "What are you afraid of? It's safe. See here!"

Hardly had I uttered the words, when the crest of the rock, undermined by the weather, gave way beneath my feet with a terrible crash. In vain did I try to catch myself by laying hold of the branches of a bush which I passed in my flight; they broke, with my weight, and I was precipitated from the top of the bank into the deep water. I heard Marguerite's heart-rending cry, and then I felt myself sinking to the bottom. A thousand thoughts rushed through my brain in those few seconds. "Here I am in the Devil's Pool. No chance of getting out.

So I am to die after all before my First Communion! It's just as well. I am in a state of grace, I hope. Perhaps my prayer that I said awhile ago has been heard. Ah! If Tom were only here! Poor Marguerite! This will kill her! What will the other children say to-morrow, when they hear I am drowned?"

Meanwhile I struggled convulsively; my eyes and nostrils filled with water; I seemed to hear a deafening noise, and felt that I was choking. I still had time to ask God to forgive my sins, and then I lost consciousness.

When Marguerite, who was only a few steps from the water's edge, saw me fall, she rushed forward with the intention of jumping in after me. She did not know how to swim, and her only hope was for some providential intervention. "Holy Mother, help us!" she prayed.

Just as she was about to throw herself into the pool, the idea darted through her brain: "Oh, if I only had Tom here!" Then a ray of hope appeared. She had Fanfan. He was remarkably light, and fleet as a race horse. She might have time to go and fetch the Newfoundland. Turning back, she whistled to Fanfan who was but a few yards away and came trotting up at her call. Swift as thought she had mounted and set off at top speed for Mesnil. The spirited animal tore on at a wild pace as if he knew his master's life depended on the swiftness of his limbs. Clinging to his mane to keep her seat, Mar-

guerite's hope began to rise as she realized the marvelous rapidity with which she was being borne along. "Perhaps I shall be in time!" she said to herself. But soon a terrible thought struck her: "I closed the gate! Fanfan will never be able to leap it, and I shall have to dismount and lose at least a minute! O God, have mercy on us! Help me to get over the gate! Dear God, I must! My brother's life depends on it!"

And now only a few yards and they would reach the barrier. "Up! Fanfan! Good horse! Up, up, jump!"

Marguerite's heart almost stops beating from suspense, and she shuts her eyes so as not to see . . . Ah! Victory! A superb leap bears them to the other side of the gate. Bravo, Fanfan, bravo! The faithful creature resumes his furious course and flies like lightning up the avenue of chestnut trees. Like a whirlwind he sweeps by the house and stops short before Tom's corner as if he knew the intentions of his mistress. To leap down, untie the dog, shout to the amazed Cillette to tell everybody to hurry to the Devil's Pool, that I had just fallen in, was but the work of an instant. Fanfan had not budged an inch, but stood motionless at his post like a soldier on guard. Hardly had my sister regained the saddle, when he started back again at the same fiendish pace as before. Marguerite no longer feared the gate. In a flash her horse had taken it as easily as a chamois, and stopped of his own accord at the place

whence I had fallen. Tom got there almost as soon.

"In the water, Tom! Go, good dog!" cried Marguerite, pointing to the spot where I had fallen. "There, there! Go, get your master, Tom! Fetch him out! Do you hear, fetch him!" Her voice was at the same time commanding and entreating.

The animal, with the wonderful instinct of his race, understood that some one was to be saved, and plunged into the water. For thirty mortal seconds Marguerite remained on her knees upon the bank, her eyes fixed upon the surface of the pool, which gradually regained the smoothness disturbed by Tom's leap. At last the dog reappeared. Oh heavens! He had found nothing. "My Mother Mary," prayed the poor child, "it was you who made me his mother. Do not let him die before his First Communion! I promise, if you will bring him back, to go with him on foot to your shrine at Nantes, and always to fast on Saturday in your honor."

Meantime, the dog, after getting his breath, dived again under the water. Marguerite upon the rock, her hand at her heart, which was beating as if about to burst, felt her strength leaving her. "I thought," she said to me later, "that I would die of anguish; but I still had the energy to ask our Lord to leave you at the bottom of the pool, if it were better for your soul's salvation."

Suddenly, a hundred feet away from the place where I had fallen in, Tom made his appearance once more, and, to Marguerite's unspeakable joy, she saw

him swimming slowly toward the shore, holding me above the water by my clothes which he had seized firmly in his teeth. The sight brought back her strength and presence of mind. She rushed to the spot toward which the Newfoundland was making, and took me in her arms, pale, disfigured, and apparently lifeless. I had been ten minutes in the Devil's Pool.

At this point my aunt, old Rose, whose heart had lent strength to her limbs, Cillette, Lexis, and all the people on the place ran up terrified, shouting, groaning, weeping and sobbing. Marguerite, who had recovered her composure and energy, at once began to use the most sensible means of restoring me. I was out of the water, but it remained to be seen whether I was still alive. The most vigorous rubbing had no effect. The point was to make me draw my breath, but my teeth were so tightly set that one was broken in the effort to force open my mouth. Once this was accomplished, it was possible to breathe a little air in, and to move the tongue, drawing it out at regular intervals, and all this gradually revived me by reëstablishing the action of the lungs.

I was saved. Still weak and almost insensible, I was carried on a mattress back to Mesnil, where Marguerite, after administering a cordial, put me to bed. I soon fell into a deep sleep. About nine in the evening I awoke, and was able to get up and take something to eat. The next morning, as fresh and

well as if nothing had happened, without even feeling fatigued, I went to Saint-Laurent, accompanied by the whole household, and made my First Communion with undisturbed recollection. I have always attributed this recovery, so rapid and so opportune, to Marguerite's prayers. My gratitude to our Lord was lively and sincere. "I owe my life to you twice over, O my God," I prayed on receiving Him in my heart, "but I know well it is only for eternity you have saved me, since I asked for life only on that condition."

The story of my escape was already known to everybody in Saint-Laurent and in the country round about. Our good pastor alluded to it in the little address which he made just before Holy Communion, and impressed upon us the importance of always being in a state pleasing to God. After Mass every one gathered around. The children, and their elders, too, all wanted to see me and shake my hand. Marguerite had to give over and over again, a hundred times at least, her account of the adventure, and they were never tired of singing her praises, while Fanfan's speed and the wonderful instinct of Tom came in for their share of admiration. In short, we were all four the heroes of the hour.

My aunt had invited Abbé Aubry and his assistants, as well as the notary and Doctor Durand, to dine at Mesnil. The repast was a joyful one, as may well be imagined. Old Rose surpassed herself. I think she must have made up her mind to make me

guilty of the sin of gluttony on the very day of my First Communion. Marguerite gaily diverted to her horse and dog all the compliments showered upon her, so, at dessert, we unanimously awarded a gold medal of the first class to the brave Newfoundland and a bronze medal to the little horse to whose swift feet I owed my life.

“Goodness!” said good Cillette, “who ever saw smarter beasts than those two? All they need is to talk. If it wasn’t for them, Master Paul would have drowned; that’s sure—and our mistress too. No one can deny it; for she would never have the heart to leave the poor little fellow to flounder in the water. She would have been in it this very minute herself, that’s sure, if she hadn’t had those two animals with her.”

Marguerite and I were resolved to fulfil as soon as possible the promise she made in the hour of danger, so we planned our pilgrimage for the Monday after Trinity Sunday. The journey would take three days. We were to spend the first night at Varades, the second at Oudon, reaching Nantes the evening of the third day, which was the vigil of Corpus Christi. Aunt Dumoulin, kind soul that she was, arranged to be present with all her people on Thursday, at the Mass of the pilgrimage. For this purpose she hired a big, two-horse brake large enough to hold all the household at Mesnil, and appointed Wednesday for the day of departure. Our pastor also declared his intention of joining the pious expedition, and cele-

brating Mass at the altar of Our Lady of Prompt Succor at Nantes. The assistants, to their regret, were obliged to remain behind to attend to the affairs of the parish.

We set out on the day appointed with eager step and joyful hearts, crossing the Loire at Saint-Florient in order to follow the right bank to Nantes. The journey was delightful and far too short to satisfy me. I was carried away with the prospect of sleeping at an inn like a real tourist. Marguerite was less enthusiastic, but she sympathized with my innocent enjoyment. We reached the Hotel de Bretagne at Nantes on Wednesday evening, and there we found Abbé Aubry and my aunt and her party, who had arrived a few hours before. The next morning, at an early hour, we made our way to the Church of Sainte-Croix, where Abbé Aubry celebrated the Mass of thanksgiving. I was allowed to receive Holy Communion, in view of the extraordinary occasion, though but ten days had passed since my First Communion. Rose, Cillette and Lexis did likewise. Even my aunt, forgetting her Jansenistic notions, approached the Holy Table in thanksgiving to our Lord for having preserved us. From that day she made it a rule to receive the Holy Eucharist once a month. The good Lord prepared her in this way for her death, which was not far off.

After Mass we returned to the hotel, where an excellent breakfast awaited us. About ten o'clock we got into the wagon, and bidding farewell to

Nantes, started back for Mesnil. At Oudon we rested, and by nightfall we were at home again.

The eventful second of June remained fixed in my memory, and it was my safeguard in the evil days.

PART II.

SILHOUETTES FROM ANJOU.

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD MEN AND WOMEN.

HAD I the brush of a Greuze or a Tèniers, I might reproduce types, scenes, and customs curious from more than one point of view. Certain it is that I should not lack for subjects.

Sometimes, as I think I have said, I accompanied my sister on her walks or drives in our part of Anjou, and with her visited the homes of the peasants. These good people received us with wonderful cordiality. You should have seen their simple joy when Marguerite appeared at their cottage doors! Those who were in the house ran to tell the members of the family who were at work in the fields, and soon the whole household would gather around "Mamzelle and the little chap." Milk, fruit, cheese, and wine, sparkling and frothy in great pitchers of brown earthenware,—the best provisions which the house afforded were set forth upon the table in the twinkling of an eye. My sister never touched them, but I was, like all children, always hungry, and I did full justice to the fruit and cream. As for the wine of Anjou, which goes right to the head, and without

warning surreptitiously steals the strength out of one's legs, I had orders never to accept any. If any one in the house were sick, Marguerite would do all she could to improve his condition, at the same time, by her sympathy and encouragement, helping him to offer up his sufferings. Then she would talk to the children, inquire as to their behavior, and get them to say their prayers. She was listened to as if she were an oracle, father, mother and children readily receiving the advice, encouragement and, when occasion demanded it, the reproofs of the young lady from Mesnil. They had much to say on the subjects which are uppermost in the peasant's mind, the storm which beat down the grain, the rain which bruised the grapes, the diseases of their horses and cattle, all the mishaps of country life, the misbehavior of the children who were so troublesome to bring up, and the rest.

The country people of Anjou form a very interesting study. Essentially Christian for the most part—at least at the time of which I write—they are, as a general rule, gentle and peaceable, but, at the same time, they easily take fire, and, when occasion arises, they do not hesitate to express their opinions. At first they are timid and silent in the presence of strangers, but their jovial humor and spontaneity of expression soon assert themselves when they are with those whom they know. There is nothing more entertaining than the inexhaustible conversation of the peasants—especially the peasants of the left bank

of the Loire. Allow me to acquaint you with a few of the types in my collection.

We will first, if you please, visit in Marguerite's train the home of the Chopins, the tenants of Der-vallière, one of my aunt's farms. I must remind you that these people, having twelve children to rear, had placed with us, in the capacity of domestics, the two oldest, Cillette and Lexis, who are already old acquaintances. The father of the Chopin family was a man of forty-five or fifty years, of a jovial and cheerful disposition, which he maintained by means of frequent visits to his cellar. If he occasionally went down sad or surly, he always came up again smiling and gay; yet he never left his reason in the bottom of the bottle, and though, after drinking, a straight line might no longer seem to him the shortest distance between two points, still the curves which he described in his course never spread as far as the ditch. I never saw him really drunk, but his natural good humor was accentuated when his nostrils were greeted by the perfume of the lucent emeralds and sparkling diamonds lighted up in his glass by the insinuating little demon in the wine of Anjou. Then Chopin's heart expanded and was ready to take in the whole world. He would have given to the first-comer all the savings so carefully put by in the old woolen stocking in the bottom of the chest. Fortunately his wife was on the look-out, and always put the key in her pocket when she saw her husband coming out of the cellar or returning from the vil-

lage, where, in company with his boon companions, he had been drinking to the speedy restoration of the monarchy.

An uncompromising royalist was Chopin! I remember one day when he was extremely gay he took me aside, and communicated to me in confidence his plans for the government of France.

"See here, Master," said he, in all seriousness, "the Comtesse de Chambord must die as soon as possible, and then Napoleon would have to die too . . . and no great loss either! Very well! Now Henri V. would marry the widow and adopt the child (the Prince Imperial), and there you are, with everybody suited. What do you think of it, Master?"

The pastor met him, one day, and reproved him for having been "in the Lord's vineyard" again. "As for that, Father," he answered, "you ought not to be put out. It is not a burn this time, it's only a scorch." And, as Abbé Aubry moved on laughingly, his parishioner called after him: "Tell me now, Father, will you call it a scorch? I want to know, see? Because if you're not going to call it a scorch, I'll just go to confession to the assistant, and he'll let me off easy, that I know."

One more anecdote to complete the portrait of the man.

A few years before, he had lost his mother-in-law, the widow Robin, whose peevish disposition had brought about many a storm in the Chopin household. When the good woman passed out of this life, the

young men of the neighborhood bore her body to the church in an open coffin, according to the custom of the country. The funeral ceremonies over, the procession took up its way to the cemetery. The road thither was extremely narrow and overgrown with brambles, which as the bearers moved along, switched into Widow Robin's face. Aroused by the pain, the supposed dead woman, who had only been in a stupor, came to life again, to the great amazement of the mourners. They carried her back to the home of her son-in-law. I do not know whether the disposition of the old lady was in any way softened after her resurrection. Be that as it may, two years later Widow Robin died for good, and was straightway carried to the cemetery along the same route as before. At this point the story becomes a bit scandalous. They say that Chopin, when the procession was about to pass by the thorny bushes, called out in an anxious tone: "Easy, boys, easy! Look out for the thorns!"

I will not swear to the truth of this. Tongues wag fast on the left bank of the river!

Soon after her recovery from the illness which had so nearly proved fatal, Marguerite had to go to the Dervallière farm to see the youngest child, little Charlot, who was troubled with convulsions most alarming to his parents. As the malady was not at all contagious, my sister had promised that I might go with her, at which I was wild with joy, for the farmer's wife always gave me the most delicious cream and the very finest of strawberries.

When we reached the Dervallière, the father of the Chopin family was in the fields with two of his boys, the oldest of the children after Cillette and Lexis. His wife, hearing Fanfan's well-known trot, came out of the house surrounded by her brood of little ones romping, playing and hanging about her skirts as best they might, all except Charlot, the little sick one, who was asleep in his cradle. Hardly had the carriage stopped before the door, when the good woman began to talk, and kept on in an uninterrupted stream during the whole of our stay.

"Well, Good-day, Mistress! And so you are well again now? Well, that's good, but I hadn't much hopes of it! And is every one well at the house? And the Mistress, and Monsieur Charles, is he well? And how is his little lady? And so he never came our way while he was here? And I was saying: 'To be sure, Monsieur Charles will bring his wife to see Dervallière before they go.' Well, it's a pity they did not get here. I saw her the other day, just the same, when she took the carriage to go away. My, but she is pretty! And not the least bit proud with a person. Monsieur Charles has done well for himself, to be sure. And I hear she is from Lyons, his lady. The men say it's very far from here. It's a bigger place than this, isn't it, Mistress?"

"It is indeed, Madame Chopin. It is a large city, far away from here at the other end of France."

"You don't say! And there are a lot of people there, I suppose. Is the country like ours? Do they

have vineyards? Well, if they are all like Monsieur Charles' wife, they must be good people, that's sure. But most likely it's the same there as it is in most places. There are good, and there are bad, aren't there, Mistress? But it must be a fine place, since Monsieur Charles likes it so well. Ah, but I am glad to see you here, Mamzelle Marguerite. How is Rose? She is as well as ever, I suppose? And Cillette and Lexis, are you still suited with them? Well, I'm glad of that! Let me tell you, Mistress, if they give you any trouble, just box their ears well. You can't manage children nowadays without it. But you are too good, Mamzelle, you couldn't hurt a flea! You're too tender with them, and that's why they cut up sometimes. Mathurin, go quick and unhitch Mamzelle's horse, and take him round and feed him. My, but he's a beautiful little beast! And look at the heat the poor creature's in! Well, no wonder, such a day as this. Come in, Mamzelle, come in, if you'll be so good. Things don't go so bad here, thanks be to God! But they might be a little better, too. Charlot, our little one, has been so sick ever since Monday. He turns and twists and jumps, and I can't get him still. I think it must be worms that are troubling him. I had a mind to send for the doctor, for I didn't think you'd be well in time. Sit down, do, Mamzelle. Marie, pull up the arm-chair for Mamzelle. Hurry up, you lazy child! My senses! Where did I ever get such a ninny as that! I said two days ago to my husband: 'Jean,

go get the doctor!’ Not that I like Dr. Durand. He is so big and red, he scares me, that man. Well, here I was alone, and afraid the poor little fellow might go off at any time, and my man didn’t want to get Dr. Durand. But I scolded and scolded, and at last he said he’d go. But, Lord, Mamzelle, he was so tipsy! He can’t be two days without taking too much. Mathurin, did you feed Mamzelle’s little horse?”

“Yes, mama.”

“Now, you children just get out! You make too much noise. Our heads are splitting.” And Madame Chopin, with a vigorous motion of her arms, swept the crowd that encumbered her out of the room, and closing the door on them, seated herself and resumed: “Well, Mamzelle, my husband started off in the morning, and he didn’t put in an appearance, and neither did the doctor. And I was just sure he was tipsy, and would fall in the road. Just then the children began to come from school, and I called to them: ‘Boys, if you see my man lying in the road, push him over into the ditch so the stage won’t run over him.’ And they said they would; but you never can depend on children! You know that, Mamzelle. Well, at last my man came back. By that time it was after seven o’clock, and—would you believe it?—he had never been to town at all! I knew very well where he had been. He had spent his time at the inn, drinking with his cronies! Oh, these fool men! They are all alike. Once they get

it in their heads to drink, the Devil himself cannot change their minds! Ah, if I only had the priest here we used to have, Abbé Rapin! He could keep them straight! You didn't know him, did you, Mamzelle? Oh, no. He was before your time. It's fifteen years since he was sent to Mouilleron. He was already getting old then. His hair was getting white. 'Little Grey,' they generally called him. Ah, but it's a pity he ever left us! I remember one day there was a fellow in the church, who kept on talking at High Mass. 'Little Grey' was taking up the collection, and he saw the fellow talking. He put down the collection basket, and went for the fellow to give him a good whack. Then the man got scared, and ran out the door, but 'Little Grey' ran after him in his surplice and biretta. The man ran like a rabbit to the other end of the place, where it comes up against the door of the inn, and thought he would hide in old Souriceau's garden—you know old Souriceau that keeps the shop? Well, 'Little Grey' was right on his heels, however, and when he went in the door 'Little Grey' flew after him, jumped over the counter, pounced on him and gave him—his benediction! You can imagine, eh? Well, after that my young man knew better than to talk in church. They both went back, and Abbé Rapin finished the collection, and the young man kept quite still till Mass was over, and then he went to confession to Abbé Rapin. We have no more priests like that, let me tell you! And more's the pity! The

men were afraid to get tipsy those days. 'Look out!' they would say. 'Here comes Little Grey.' And my, but he could preach! That *was* preaching! When he first came—and he was just priested then—he could preach very well even then, a little young priest just fresh made, and he knew how to preach right off. After him we had Abbé Guibert, the strong man they called him. My! He was big and strong, and such a fine-looking man! He could lift a cask of wine to his knee, and then drink from the bung-hole. Everyone loved him, too, and I tell you, when *he* told the men to go to confession, they went! Ah, well! And now they have sent us Abbé Berteaux. Well, he's a good priest—I don't deny that; but he is not big or strong. No, he's little, and the men are not afraid of him at all! I tell you what it is, Mamzelle, and I say it because it's the truth, the Bishop, with all due respect to him, is just making game of us; else *why* does he send us a girl for assistant priest? O, yes; the men are mighty hard to manage nowadays. That's not to say I have much to complain of in mine. No. He's a good man, sure, and hasn't a bad streak in him when he's not drinking. But that miserable wine! And he's always a mind to drink. 'I want a drink;' 'let's take a drink;' 'will you have a drink?' and so it goes. If a neighbor passes by, 'Come in,' he says, 'and try my cask.' And then, when they have both tasted our wine, they go off to try the neighbor's wine, and they go the rounds, and so it keeps up until all the casks

are dry. That keeps them tipsy most of the time for six months of the year. It's true it takes very little to muddle my man! Three or four glasses, and he's done for. That's not like the farmer at La Perrine! When you see him tipsy, you may be sure he has drunk at least nine bottles in succession."

Here Madame Chopin paused for breath, and Marguerite took advantage of the intermission to go over to the cradle and inquire into the condition of the sick baby. It appeared that his case was not very serious. Marguerite prepared a remedy which she administered herself, and after she had prescribed some simple treatment, we took leave of the good people of Dervallière.

I might also tell of a visit which we made on Pélagie Saboureau, of the village of Mare-Noire, in the parish of Saint-Laurent. Worthy Mother Saboureau must have been at that time sixty-eight or seventy years old. She had been Charles' nurse, and he made a point of going to see her with his wife, when they came to Mesnil on their wedding trip.

We—Charles, Lucie, Marguerite, and I—arrived unexpectedly at the old woman's house. She had no idea of the surprise in store for her. She was very short-sighted, and it was a long time since she had seen my brother, and so at first she did not recognize him. She was extremely polite to Marguerite, whom she saw often, and also to the handsome officer and the pretty lady who did her the honor of coming to her house; but she did not dare ask their names.

"And so, Mother Saboureau," said Marguerite, "you do not know who this fine young man is whom I have brought to see you?"

The old woman wiped her eyes, put on her spectacles, after carefully polishing the glasses, took Charles unceremoniously by the arm, and drew him over to the window. Suddenly turning to Marguerite who, with Lucie, was in fits of laughter, she said: "Is it really my boy, Mamzelle?"

"It is, indeed, Mother Saboureau. It's your big Charles come back to see you. He has changed a great deal, hasn't he?"

The good woman, crying for joy, threw her arms around Charles' neck.

"And it's real good of you, my little boy, to come and see your old nurse!"

"Why, of course, I came to see you. It's the least I could do. Don't I always love you just the same, Nana?"

"Well, well! And how handsome you have grown! And what fine clothes you have on! And look, Mamzelle Marguerite, at the height he's got to! That's because he was well fed when he was a baby! When he was little, all the women about here were just as jealous as they could be.

"'Pélagie,' they would say, 'aren't you ashamed to have that boy get so fat?' Of course, I was not ashamed. And when I took him home to the Hut-terie, to your house, for his mother to see him, she said: 'How beautiful he is! You are very good,

Pélagie, to take such fine care of my Charles,' and I said: 'Lord, Madame, he is as fat as I can make him.' 'You have done very well with him,' she said, and they gave me twenty francs over and above the wages, because he was so much bigger than they expected."

"And now tell me, my boy," continued Mother Saboureau, "who is the lovely lady with you? Isn't she your wife?"

"Yes, Nana, and she loves you, too."

"Of course, I do," said Lucie, who was much interested in this little scene. "And I must thank you, too, for having taken such good care of my future husband," and she gave her her own picture and that of Charles set in a pretty medallion, which she hung around her neck, at the same time slipping a generous sum of money into her hand.

"A thousand thanks, Madame," said Mother Saboureau, "and now, if you want me to be perfectly happy, let me kiss you, too."

"Why, certainly," said Lucie, and she stooped, and kissed the old woman's wrinkled cheek.

"And now, Madame," Mother Saboureau went on, "I can tell you, you have done well for yourself. You drew a lucky number, when you got my big Charles for a husband. He will never give you any trouble *on purpose*. But, Lord! he is lively and always on the go. It is not easy to hold him in. If he makes you trot the way he did me sometimes when he was little, you will have need of patience, I can

tell you! But, Lord! he is not really bad—not the least in the world. And then, let me tell you, if he is not good, you must keep him in. That's the way I always managed. I would say, 'You shan't go out!' And then I would tie him to the foot of my bed, and how he hated that! Oh, it would not be fifteen minutes before he was ready to say he was sorry!"

"Very well! I will try that, too, some day," said Lucie, "I am glad you told me of it."

At last we said good-by to Mother Saboureau, and started back for Mesnil, laughing heartily on the way at the amusing interview.

"Really," said Lucie, "that visit alone is worth the trip from Lyons to Angers."

Another character was a poor woman in evident distress, who stopped us one day when we were about twelve or fifteen miles from Mesnil on one of those pleasant excursions which Marguerite and I took once a month. We had camped for the day in a green meadow beside a sparkling brook, and, as evening was now coming on, we were about to pack up our belongings and depart for home, when we saw a big stout woman running toward us, sobbing as if her heart would break. When she had caught up to us and had recovered her breath, she said to Marguerite, beseechingly: "Aren't you the young lady from Mesnil?" And on being answered in the affirmative, "Well, then, it's the good Lord Himself has sent you. Oh, come quick, Mamzelle, if

you will be so good, and see a poor man who may be dead this very minute! It is Nicolas, my own brother, Mamzelle! And to think I should have caught you in time! We saw you from the other side of the river, and Nicolas' wife and the women who were with us said to me: 'Luzelle' (that's my name, if you please. That is, it's what they call me, because my husband's name was Luzeau), 'Luzelle,' they said, 'that looks like the young lady from Mesnil, who knows so much about sick people. Go and fetch her.' And I didn't like to. I said to myself: 'A fine young lady like that won't want to come to poor people like us.' But they said: 'Yes, she will. She's not a bit proud, and she'll come if you ask her.' "

"Of course I'll go," said Marguerite, "I will go right away, and you can get into the carriage with us, so you will get home quicker."

"Oh! Mamzelle," said the poor woman gratefully, "they said you were not proud. I can see that for myself now."

We were not long getting ready. In a few minutes Fanfan was hitched up, and, all three packing ourselves as best we might in the little phaeton which was only made for two, we set off at full speed.

The home of these poor people was only about three hundred yards away, but it was on the other side of the river, and, as there was no way of crossing at that point, we had to make a *détour* of a mile and a half before we came to a bridge.

On the way the good woman kept repeating by way of encouragement: "Well, if death is on him already, he can't escape, that's sure; but if he's not dead now, he won't die yet awhile."

I could not help laughing at this philosophic refrain, and I know Marguerite would have liked to, by the way she bit her lips.

"Tell me what is the matter with your brother?" she said, trying to keep her countenance.

"Oh! Mamzelle, it would take magic to tell. You see the doctor at our place, Dr. Sorin, came this morning to see him, and left a big bottle of red medicine that cost fifteen sous, and he was to take it this evening. And there comes big Fine,¹ the girl at Laurent who works at the Sorinière farm, and knows a lot, because she went three years to the Sisters' school,—well, big Fine looked at the bottle, and she said it had on it, 'Shake well before giving this dose.' 'Lord,' she said to Nicolas' wife, my sister-in-law, 'we have to shake your man. It says so on the bottle.' And then, for we were not able, the three of us, Nicolas he is so very big and heavy, we got two women from the village to come and help us. And then we took him, two by the arms and two by the legs, and Fine at his head, and we shook him and shook him and shook him again. And at first he cried out like everything, but in the end he said nothing at all. And then we put him in bed again to give him his dose, but he couldn't take it,

¹ Josephine.

and he has been lying there ever since, as though he was dead. And then we saw you across the river, and they said: 'Luzelle, go over and fetch her,' and then I went after you!"

Marguerite herself burst out laughing. "Foolish people!" she said, "it was the medicine, not the sick man, you were to shake!"

"Lord! Perhaps so, Mamzelle. Then it's Dr. Sorin's fault, because he never told us."

Meanwhile Fanfan was devouring space, and in a few minutes we had crossed the two miles which separated us from the home of these good people. On arriving we found the house crowded and the whole village in a turmoil. Nicolas, the well-shaken, who had fainted from the violent treatment administered by his well-meaning relatives, had recovered consciousness, and when Marguerite asked him how he did, he made answer in a strong, hearty voice: "Thank you kindly, lady. I don't know what all these women have been up to. Get them to leave me alone, and to bring me a swallow of wine and a little bite of pork. That's all I need."

We laughed heartily, for the appearance of the sick man was certainly reassuring. The women were full of excuses for having put us to so much trouble.

"Don't disturb yourselves about it," said Marguerite. "If it were not for you, we should not have had this very pleasant drive, which we shall not soon forget."

As we made ready to depart, Nicolas' mother came forward with a magnificent eel, which her husband had caught the day before, and which she now offered Marguerite by way of honorarium. I had a horror of the creatures, and I began to make a horrible fuss and to beg my sister not to take that big snake into the phaeton. She was as much alarmed as I, and was very willing to forego the gift; so we resumed our way toward Mesnil in high spirits. So much so that we had to stop several times on the road to have our laugh out.

But what purpose is served by permitting my pen to run on so freely in recording the every-day occurrences of those good old times? Can there be any interest for the general reader in these silhouettes from Anjou, whose only merit lies in the simplicity and unconsciousness of their subjects? Yet they tell me I should do wrong to despise these wayside flowers. Lacking other perfume, they at least exhale that of sincerity, which is a quality that authors love to find. So I continue, setting at rest the misgivings which have suggested themselves.

Did you ever know Pastoureau and his wife, the good people who held the lease of the farm of Pâtis-Clouet under "Mamzelle Dumoulin?" Old man Pastoureau was, at the time of which I speak, somewhere about seventy-five years old, and his worthy better-half, "La Pastourelle," as the country people called her, was not far from the same age. They

had lived fifty years on that farm, which they had leased the day of their marriage, and which they had never left. They had had twelve boys, who, in due time, established themselves in the commune of Saint-Laurent or in the neighboring parishes, so that before very many years the country round about was peopled with sturdy little "Pastoureaus" and pretty little "Pastourelles." There were one hundred and eighteen grandchildren, and great grandchildren, so I was told, at the time of the death of the old people. That same year, 1854, twenty-two Pastoureaus served under their country's flag at the same time. Naturally enough the grand-parents were unable to recognize all their descendants, who popped up unexpectedly from every quarter, saluting them with a joyful: "Good-day, Grandpa! Good-day, Granny! Are you pretty well?"

Only the oldest of the family remained at Pâtis-Clouet with his wife and ten children. The land was productive enough to support all that large household.

Pastoureau and his wife lived in complete accord. A little cloud occasionally showed itself on their horizon, when the old man would return home on a Sunday evening, his legs just "a grain" heavier than usual because of a somewhat prolonged rest at the inn. La Pastourelle would then grow hot. One day I heard her address her husband in a rousing philippic.

"There you are, drunk again, wicked man! I

can tell you, if I had known this when we were being married, you'd still be waiting for my 'yes' before the parish priest!"

"You are mightily mistaken, my deary," replied Pastoreau peaceably, "this is not *drunk*. Don't talk about what you have never seen. You are lucky, let me tell you, to have happened on a man like me! There are wives who have not done so well."

"Aren't you ashamed," pursued the old woman, "at your age to get yourself in such a state as this? Just you wait until you die, and you'll see whether the Good Lord doesn't send you straight to hell!"

Old Pastoreau shook his head gently, and after a moment's silence, said, "The Good Lord, mark it well, is not like you." Then he paused. "And lucky it is," he added; "othewise—mercy on us!—we'd be in a bad way."

There the dispute ended, and there was fair weather all the week. It was truly a model household.

I remember well the celebration of their fiftieth wedding anniversary. It was magnificent. Abbé Berteaux, the first assistant pastor, had the church decorated. And when the time for Mass came, the church was as full of people as if it had been Sunday. The party started from Pâtis-Clouet amid the firing of bombs and shooting off of muskets. There was a regular procession. The twenty-two soldiers, who had obtained leave of absence for a week, were all there, and Abbé Berteaux placed them at the head of the cortège. After them came the long file

of the hundred and eighteen Pastoureaus and Pastourelles. Next came the two old people and their twelve sons, all of whom were then living, and the pastor closed up the line, dressed in his best cassock in honor of the occasion.

After the ceremony, they marched back to Pâtis-Clouet, stopping on the way at Mesnil, where my aunt offered refreshments to the entire party. The soldiers and the heads of the different families were each served with a glass of cognac, while the women and children had *eau sucrée*.

Old Rose, who was extremely economical, required considerable urging before she would consent to dispose of this hospitality, which she considered wasteful. In consequence, the allowance of liquor in each glass was almost infinitesimal. This niggardliness called forth from old Pastoureau a sally which was typical of Anjou. One of his sons remarked, smacking his lips after swallowing his own portion: "Famous stuff, that."

"Yes," replied the old man, "but there was only about enough to fill the bill of a blackbird."

The procession soon resumed the march to the farm, where a great feast had been prepared. All the families in good circumstances in the neighborhood had contributed to this monster banquet. Presents of eatables and of wine had come from every direction. The Comtesse de Saint-Julien sent an entire beef. It would take a second Homer to describe this prodigious repast, which lasted from one o'clock in the afternoon to six. Two hundred peo-

ple were seated at the table of honor, which was set out-doors in front of the farm-house, and of that number exactly one hundred and thirty-two were Pastoureaus and Pastourelles. My aunt was seated on the right, my sister on the left of the patriarch. About four o'clock Marguerite and I went home, but my aunt stayed bravely on to the very end.

I shall finish the sketch of Pastoureau with a characteristic anecdote, which took place a little before his death. The good man fell sick a few weeks after the celebration of his golden wedding. Grave symptoms soon made their appearance, and it was judged advisable to send for the priest. When he had received the last Sacraments, Pastoureau commenced his pious and sincere thanksgiving out loud.

"O, my Creator, O, my sweet Jesus," he exclaimed in perfectly audible tones, "how good You are to come and visit a creature like me! O, my kind Jesus, take me to Your holy Paradise, though I don't deserve it, just so I can see You forever without end."

At this moment his good wife came to him with a little water in which the priest had purified his fingers.

"I must drink that?" said Pastoureau.

"Yes, dear, the priest says so."

The old man obeyed, and then said in an undertone: "In faith, it's more than fifty years since I took as much water." Then he continued his thanksgiving aloud: "O, my Creator," etc. The good soul quietly expired a few hours later.

And now would you like to see “*éclater sans pompe*” a rural idyl?

Picture to yourself the scene: a vast meadow enclosed by thick hedges, which will permit us to see and hear the actors without restraining them by our presence. A public road runs by the prairie, *la prée*, as they call it in Anjou. The gate which usually closes the entrance to the pasture has, through carelessness, been left open. At the other end of the field, a narrow lane between two hedges leads to the farm. It is four o'clock in the afternoon. The burning sun of July oppresses nature and mankind. The cattle browse lazily here and there upon the new-mown grass, already dried by the torrid rays of the dog-days sun.

Mistress Auger, of the farm of St. Nicolas, and her daughter Victorine watch the herd. At their feet La Brie, the faithful dog, sleeps with one eye, and keeps the other on the animals committed to his care. The two women, like their dog, doze peacefully, while yonder, at the far end of the meadow, “the great white oxen”

couchés parmi les herbes,
Bavent avec lenteur sur leurs fanons épais,
Et suivent de leurs yeux languissants et superbes
Le songe intérieur qu'ils n'achèvent jamais.²

¹ Leconte de Lisle. Midi roi des Étés.

Couched in the grass
Move their huge jaws in rhythmic rumination
And with superb and languid eyes pursue
The fleeting vision which they ne'er achieve.

We were seated, Marguerite and I, upon a fresh carpet of moss, and I was enjoying at my leisure some delicious cherries, when all of a sudden a panic seized upon the herd, so peaceful up to that moment. I never knew what it was that frightened the animals, but off they started, altogether, with a terrible bellowing, their tails in mid-air. In one instant cows and oxen, bulls, heifers and calves tore in mad career across the field, and poured out upon the high road.

Mistress Auger and her daughter, aroused by the uproar, began at once to scream and shriek, urging on La Brie by voice and gesture to the exercise of his functions.

“La Brie!!! The cows, the cows! Good dog! Fetch 'em, fetch 'em! Bring them in! The cows, La Brie, the cows!”

But the cows are already some distance off, and La Brie may be seen, leaping to right and left, nipping an ear here and a leg there, and driving the herd straight away on the road to Angers.

At the sight of this the exasperation of the good women breaks forth in maledictions upon the stupid animal. “La Brie, La Brie! Ah! the stupid dog! Here dog, here dog! Did you ever in your life see such a plague? La Brie, come home, sir!! He will take them all the way to Paris! Bad dog! Bad dog! We paid four pistoles for him and he is not worth a sou! La Brie, come here, sir! Ah! Bad dog!”

We laughed and laughed behind the hedge at

the comic indignation of Mother Auger and her daughter. But suddenly a new element is introduced, and the actors pass from rage to admiration, an eminently dramatic sentiment, if we are to believe the most competent critics.

La Brie, who was being maligned (which is the usual fate of genius here below), La Brie, understanding (if the word shocks you, provide me with a better), understanding, I say, the impossibility of making the herd about face, after a reflection made with the rapidity of lightning, decided to charge on the rear, which would drive his unruly subjects in a scientific curve up to the other entrance to the pasture. In like manner did the great Condé, suddenly inspired on the battlefield of Rocroy, improvise on the spot a new plan of attack, which changed defeat into victory.

A little later, when our two peasants had about exhausted the vocabulary of vituperation, they heard behind them the soft thunder of galloping hoofs, and in an instant they saw streaming out into the meadow the entire herd, once more safe within the enclosure, thanks to La Brie. The last harsh epithet, dying away upon their lips, gave place to a torrent of benedictions which continued for at least five minutes.

“La Brie! Ah! Good dog! And whoever would believe it! He can do everything but talk, and there are plenty that talk and know less than he does. Good dog! Ah! What a good dog! We paid four

pistoles for him, but he's worth ten if he's worth a sou. Come here, La Brie, come here. You are almost as smart as people. Good dog! Ah! Good dog!"

There is much philosophy beneath all this—and psychology, too. How our judgment on a certain subject may alter in a short space of time! For my part, when I feel myself beginning to warm up either in favor or in condemnation, I sometimes stop before my feelings have become irresistible, and then I pull out from beneath the ashes of time, the blurred silhouette of Mother Auger and Mademoiselle Victorine and La Brie, and I say to myself, smiling: "What a dog! Ah! What a dog!"

Another character was old Granny Rigollet, snake-killer by profession, and having, so they said, infallible remedies for snake-bites.

We had recourse to her one day, when old Tom was bitten by a snake. The poor animal swelled up immediately and we were afraid he was going to die. We were away out in the country, at least six miles from Mesnil. Fortunately Marguerite never went without her little medicine case. She at once made a deep incision in the wounded part, and poured in volatile salts. One would have thought that the poor dog knew that the pain was for his good. He bore without flinching the sharp stab of the lancet, and when Marguerite had finished, he licked her hand. We had great trouble getting him into the phaeton, for the poor beast was quite helpless. We were in a great hurry to get him home.

"I will stop at Granny Rigollet's," said Marguerite. "They say she has good remedies for snake poison. I have not much faith in them, but we can see what they are."

As soon as the old woman saw us, she exclaimed, tragically: "Another sin at the door of those miserable vipers! Is it you, Mamzelle, or the little boy that's bitten? No, it's the dog. So much the better. At least it's not a Christian they have hold of this time! Now, Mamzelle, you must tell me the place where the dog was bitten, and what time he was bitten. Then to-morrow I will go at exactly the same time to that place and wait for the vermin, because he will come out then to look for the dog in the same place where he bit him before. He must be killed; see? Or else the poison will keep on working in your dog. Those creatures always take their poison with them. If they move this way or that way the poison moves the same way, and that's why it never stops working in the people that are bitten. But if the vermin is dead, then the poison can't move any more, and the people get well—animals, too. Let me tell you. You know Madame Huchet of La Faisanderie? Well, she had a pig that was bitten, too, if you please, by a viper—it was a red one, I think—right in the nose. You know how pigs always will go with their snouts to the ground! And there was Madame Huchet a-weeping and a-wailing. 'O! my pig,' she said, 'my pig that was getting on so nice; there it is done for! And

isn't it a shame? You could see the beast fattening before your very eyes.' 'La Huchet,' I said to her, 'you must kill the vermin.' She did what I told her, and the poison didn't work any more, and she saved her pig; and they only just killed it Friday, and are making blood-pudding this minute."

"And is that your only remedy?" said Marguerite to Granny Rigollet, laughing.

"Yes, Mamzelle. You only need one to cure with. That's the only one I've got, but it's a mighty good one. Just try it, and you will see."

"And how much do I owe you?"

"Two farthings, Mamzelle, for telling you my secret, and six farthings more if I kill the snake."

As we had no farthings about us, we gave the old woman two sous, and continued our way to Mesnil. The salts, moreover, had taken effect. Three days later Tom was on his feet once more. The venom, it seemed, had stopped "working."

CHAPTER VII.

AUNT DUMOULIN'S THURSDAYS.

FROM time immemorial my aunt had given a dinner on Thursdays to which she invited a few old friends living in the neighborhood. They sat down to dinner at six o'clock in summer, at five in winter, and after the repast, which lasted until half-past six or half-past seven, according to the season, they played whist, "boston," or écarté, or—and this I liked the best—they would gather around the pastor of Saint-Laurent, to listen to the tales, a store of which he had collected in the course of his long and varied experience. At half-past nine, with the gravity of a university rector, followed by the four faculties, old Rose majestically entered the drawing-room, and proceeded to serve the tea, whilst Cillette and Lexis, stumbling behind her, moved hither and thither, the boy bearing a bottle of old rum and his sister carrying a pyramid of cakes. Soon after tea, the company dispersed until the following Thursday, when they would assemble again without further invitation. The last invitation must have been at least ten years old, as the foundation was one of remote antiquity. My aunt, with this exception, received no company, nor did she ever make visits;

but not for the world would she have departed from this ancient and honorable custom.

Permit me to present to you the guests—always the same—who, week after week, were to be seen at the table of Mademoiselle Dumoulin. Honor to whom honor is due. I will begin with our excellent pastor, the Abbé Aubry, who had never missed a single Thursday since 1807, which was the authentic date of the founding of this time-honored institution. This was the year he became pastor of the parish. One of his assistants, sometimes Abbé Berteaux, sometimes Abbé Denis, accompanied him as a rule. It was very seldom that all three came. Abbé Aubry, very wisely, wanted to be certain that his parishioners could always find a priest at the rectory in case of necessity.

About half an hour before dinner time, the antique vehicle of the presbytery, drawn by old Coco, stopped quietly before the door, and while Lexis disposed of the horse and carriage, the two gentlemen stepped into the hall, where, without ceremony, they finished saying their breviaries, my aunt and Rose being meantime busy with the final preparations.

Ten minutes later (each guest arrived at a certain hour with mathematical precision), Dr. Durand, mounted upon his grey mare, cantered gently up the avenue of chestnut trees. After taking his mount to the stable and personally providing for her necessities, he betook himself to the garden, where

he walked up and down, perfectly at home, smoking his pipe.

And now appears an old family barouche, hitched to two plough-horses and driven by a farmhand transformed for the occasion into a coachman. This is the equipage of Maître Hardy, the notary, whom I now have the honor to present together with his wife and his daughter, Mademoiselle Adèle, the fashionables of Saint-Laurent. Our company is now almost complete. We await the brothers Ducoudray, two "old young men," who danced most elegantly, it seems, some sixty years ago. They arrived at Mesnil with Mademoiselle Agathe, their housekeeper, in a fine chariot drawn by a superb mule, and driven by "Zidore" (Isidore), their little house-boy, a child of twelve or thirteen years, whom his masters, priding themselves on their elegance, had arrayed in yellow livery with irresistible effect.

Lexis detested Zidore, first of all, because he came from the right bank of the river, and also because this elegant young man assumed an air of superiority toward him; but, above all, because Zidore had had the audacity to propose that he serve at dinner in the place of Lexis. Undoubtedly he would have acquitted himself more creditably than the dull and clumsy scion of the house of Chopin, but imagine the discredit which would have been cast upon the whole country-side if one of those "good-for-nothing Nantes people" had dictated to us! And so the offer of the poor boy had been re-

jected with disdain, and, as was only just, he was relegated to the lower end of the kitchen table, when the servants came to have their dinner.

The unfortunate child must have passed a stupid evening on that occasion, for no one would talk with him or even answer his questions. Never was "Coventry" more strict. But, then, why did he come from the other side of the river? Why did he wear a yellow coat, and, above all, why did he put on the airs of a duke? Cillette, it must be confessed, was a bit smitten by the elegance and fine appearance of Monsieur Zidore, but her brother gave her distinctly to understand that "patriotism" demanded that she conceal her admiration.

But here we are enlarging upon Isidore and forgetting his masters.

When the chariot came to within two or three hundred yards of the house, the boy drew up the mule at a turn in the avenue, and the two gentlemen, who were extremely ceremonious, prepared, with the assistance of Mademoiselle Agathe, to put the finishing touches to their toilets.

Hidden behind a great chestnut tree, I was one day the indiscreet witness of this curious performance, which made me laugh till I cried, and which I straightway described to Marguerite.

The two old gentlemen—the elder was eighty-seven, his brother eighty-three—took off their coats and arrayed themselves in regulation swallow-tails. Then, removing their slippers, they put on, not

without considerable difficulty, brilliant patent-leathers, and drew over their wrinkled hands corn-colored gloves of the most approved shade. But I was about to forget the most interesting detail. When their toilet was about completed, Mademoiselle Agathe handed to each gentleman a beautiful little morocco case, which enclosed a set of false teeth of the very latest make. Ducoudray *ainé* and Ducoudray *cadet* delicately adjusted the machinery to their ancient jaws, and, somewhat rejuvenated by this bath of youth, they again took their places in the carriage, prepared to make a solemn entrance into the drawing-room at Mesnil. Zidore leapt to his seat, and the mule, roused by a good crack of the whip, dashed up the few remaining yards of the avenue in fine style.

The elder brother stepped first from the carriage (exactly the same ceremony was observed every Thursday) and presented to my aunt a bouquet of roses, violets, heather, or forget-me-nots, according to the season; while the younger, who was a poet, offered with a significant smile some verses—always a sonnet—sometimes to my aunt, who invariably put them in her pocket, and never referred to them again, and sometimes to Marguerite, who was very much embarrassed by the attention, as she could not equivocate, and yet would have liked to give the old man pleasure. Then, again, the old gentleman would present his poem to the notary's lady, the colossal Madame Hardy, who used it for a fan dur-

ing dinner. Even Mademoiselle Adèle was sometimes the recipient of the favor, in which case she blushed with pleasure, and carefully preserved the sonnet in her scrap-book, after paying the highest compliments to the author.

But all the guests have arrived, and it is now time for dinner. Old Rose, jealous of her reputation as a cook, surpassed herself on Thursdays. The menu was carefully prepared, but there was little variety. We generally had vermicelli soup, partridges with cabbage, roast hare, game pie, vegetables from the garden, fruit and cakes, the whole washed down with the delicious wine of Anjou. On special days there would be solemnly placed upon the table a bottle of the famous wine of Charles X., (1825), in which all drank the king's health except the doctor, who was a rabid Republican, and always protested—although his convictions did not carry him so far as to make him refuse the reactionary liquor. Outside of the hunting season, partridge gave place to chicken, and hare to beef or mutton.

After dinner the lords of creation and my aunt drank a glass of cognac, while the weaker sex and myself moistened our lips with a drop of inoffensive anisette.

As I had no companion of my own age, I must have found the dinner and the evening which followed stupid indeed, were it not that kind Providence had made me very observant. Besides, it must be acknowledged that our guests were most

interesting subjects for study. Unconsciously they posed before me, week after week, for years, and I ended by knowing them through and through.¹

What a curious type Maître Hardy was, the notary of Saint-Laurent! Stiff, cold, and formal, above the excitement of revolutions (valuable quality in these our days!), I imagine that Maître Hardy never either laughed or wept. One might well speculate as to whether the notary of Saint-Laurent had ever been young, or whether he had not rather come into the world at the prosaic age of five-and-forty. He spoke of the uprisings of June and of the bloodshed in the streets of Paris as imperturbably as he would draw up a marriage contract, or execute a will.

With unalterable patience, and without the least sign of annoyance, he bore with the variable moods of Madame Hardy, who was as lively and impetuous as he himself was calm and frigid.

In other respects, the pair were united and in perfect accord, but, in order to bear with one another, both must have had that amount of patience which, to use the phrase of Buffon, "borders upon genius."

Maître Hardy related on more than one occasion, in his impenetrable manner, an adventure of his youth, which will, I think, give an adequate idea of the man. You know those old family stories, which

¹It is necessary to repeat that *all the proper names* occurring in this book are absolutely fictitious, with the exception of the names of a few characters of the Wars of Vendée.

do service so often, and which every one knows by heart. The narrator alone, in most cases, forgets that he has told his tale over and over again, and fails to perceive the look of recognition which creeps over the countenance of his hearers, as they see their old acquaintance looming up over the horizon.

But, to resume, Maître Hardy was completing his law course at Poitiers (he must have been twenty-two or three at the time), when, one day, he made a bet of twenty-five thousand francs with one of his friends, that he would take to Paris by the high road eighteen hares, letting them run free, and without tying them up, night or day.

The bet was accepted, and young Hardy set to work to carry out his plan. First of all, he trained carefully six dogs, whose duty it was to keep the hares together and head them in the right direction when they broke away. Then he spent six months training his eighteen little animals, in the fields and on the roads, first keeping them in leash and then gradually setting them free. One may imagine the endless pains it took to accustom those timid creatures to move together, not to be frightened by the carts and wagons which they encountered, and to pass to the right or left, to stop and start again at the word of command. At last, after six months of rehearsing, he set out on the highway from Bordeaux to Paris. Two dogs, side by side, followed the long-eared battalion, two others served as flank

escorts, and, finally, two mastiffs of very respectable size and strength formed the advance guard, and undertook to ward off those of their kind whose presence was likely to throw the caravan into confusion. Placide himself brought up the rear, watching the whole, anticipating every possible mishap, and directing the dogs by whistling.

In spite of these precautions, he was a hundred times on the point of losing his bet. Now it would be a blockade of carts, impossible to foresee in time, which would throw the wild troop into alarm and confusion; then they would meet unexpectedly with a herd of cattle or sheep, or mischievous school-boys, standing at a safe distance, would throw stones into the midst of the ranks, or in a hundred other ways an unexpected panic was produced, which scattered the hares to the four winds. Often it took hours, sometimes days, to gather them together again and resume the march. Any one but Placide would have abandoned the attempt, even at the cost of twenty-five thousand francs. But, as we have remarked, Providence had endowed him with incomparable patience, which obstacles served but to strengthen. He at last had the satisfaction, on August the first, 1824, of entering Paris with his eighteen hares, surrounded by the faithful dogs that had escorted them on the journey, amidst the indescribable enthusiasm of the spectators.

The loser, who had noted carefully the tactics and procedure of young Hardy during the trip, now gave

free expression to his admiration, and invited his fortunate challenger, together with their common friends, to a grand dinner at the best restaurant in Paris. The poor hares formed the contents of an enormous pasty, which, after being tasted, was generously given over to the intelligent dogs, who had been such faithful guides. It was only just, for to them belonged a good portion of the glory.

At the end of the banquet, the young man who had lost his bet handed over to his opponent then and there the twenty-five notes of a thousand francs each, which were to be the foundation of his fortune. On that day Placide Hardy espoused fame, and on the rebound, Mademoiselle Sidonie. All the newspapers, liberal and conservative, resounded with his praises, and for a whole week through this widespread publicity he attracted much attention. Fond of adventure, and a lover of the marvellous, Mademoiselle Sidonie N—— become possessed with the idea that here was the husband of her dreams. Friends brought about a meeting, and relations were established between the two families. The young people were congenial, and Mademoiselle Sidonie, blinded by her lively imagination, did not perceive that her admirer, while possessed of very estimable qualities, was absolutely deficient in those with which she gratuitously endowed him. She hurried matters to such good purpose, that, a fortnight after their first meeting, the marriage of the pair was celebrated. The bride added two hundred thousand francs to the

modest nest-egg provided by the rabbits for their ungrateful master, so that young Hardy was at once in a position to buy the legal practice of Saint-Laurent, which was at that time for sale. For thirty years he had managed it with the same calm, undisturbed perseverance with which he had trained his hares, and, as patience is the first virtue necessary to the lawyer, his business was extremely successful.

As for poor Sidonie, time had stripped her of her illusions, and, although she sincerely loved her husband, she was forever proclaiming that she was a martyr, and that, for a woman with ideals, it was indescribable suffering to be tied for life to a man who was indifferent to all but the practical, as was her husband. She retailed her woes at the dinner-table every Thursday, and wound up by imploring her daughter to think well before casting in her lot for life with that of any man.

Mademoiselle Adèle, who was dying to get married, would answer in a lively manner that she had plenty of time to think about the matter, that she was in no such hurry as were some people whom she might mention, and that, moreover, it was possible that she might never be willing to change her state of life, etc. This did not prevent her being horribly jealous of Marguerite, who had had ten or twelve offers in the past year, to all of which she had replied that she was not thinking of marrying for the present. Adèle, let it be said, had yet to note the first advances of a suitor.

Whenever she came to Mesnil, she plied my sister with questions: "Monsieur So-and-so was here the other day, I know. I suppose it was to ask your aunt's permission to propose? The Comtesse de Saint-Julien stayed a whole hour at the rectory yesterday. I am quite sure she was asking Abbé Aubry to persuade you to marry her son. Why don't you accept him? Are you so happy here at Mesnil? If I were you, I would be bored to death."

Marguerite had to summon all her patience and charity in order to bear with the persistence of the young girl. "Why," she would ask gently, "do you come to me with all these questions? My aunt is the one to go to for that sort of information."

Then Adèle would get angry, and accuse my sister of being proud, of being vain of her knowledge and of her accomplishments, of despising her equals, of wishing to pass for a saint so she might marry a duke or a marquis—and so on *ad infinitum*.

This unfortunate young woman seemed to have a gift for making herself disagreeable to everybody. She was the very type and pattern of the domestic tyrant, so harsh and exacting on every little point that her father and mother could never keep their servants for any length of time. The year before her daughter's marriage, Madame Hardy changed her maid six times. It was not altogether Adèle's fault either. She had been very badly brought up.

I fairly detested her, because she was so cruel to animals. Marguerite, it may be remembered, had

checked that fault in me, and ever afterwards I refused to tolerate it in others.

One fine day in summer, a note was brought over to Mesnil from Adèle, asking Marguerite if she might borrow the horse and phaeton for an expedition which she proposed to make to a neighboring point. My sister was much annoyed by the request, but not knowing how to refuse she made the best of it, and gave Alexis instructions to harness Fanfan and take him over to the lawyer's house. Alexis had no sooner driven off than she said, "I wish I had refused. Adèle is a good girl, but she has not a particle of common sense."

That evening at nine o'clock Fanfan was sent back in a most deplorable state. He could scarcely stand, and we were afraid we would lose him. With care, however, we brought him round, and before long he was once more in good condition. Later we learned from the maid who had gone with her that the hair-brained Adèle had driven the poor beast sixty miles with scarcely any rest at all. Marguerite resolved to lend Fanfan no more, no matter how urgent the request, and she even warned Alexis never under any pretext to lend him to Mademoiselle Hardy during her absence.

Let me add, in order to dispose once for all of Adèle, that she finally succeeded in marrying a marquis, though his title was of doubtful validity. His name was Arthur de Mendoza y Fuegos. (She had always aspired to the nobility!) This personage was

neither more nor less than an adventurer, and when he had run through his wife's fortune, he departed for America in the company of another woman, and was never heard of again. Poor Adèle returned to her parents more embittered, jealous, and discontented than ever. There was, to be sure, some consolation for her in the fact that for the remainder of her days she rejoiced in the sonorous title of Marquise de Mendoza y Fuegos, but this advantage did not, I am certain, console the notary, her father, for the loss of his good hard cash.

But let us return to our guests.

The "little Ducoudrays," as they were generally called, were unusual types. The elder, Antoine, whom his brother always addressed respectfully as "Ducoudray," enjoyed, in spite of his extreme age, the full possession of his mental faculties. His health was comparatively good, but he stooped very much when he walked, his head dropping nearly to the level of his waist. He spoke very deliberately, in a quavering voice, chopping off each syllable. Monsieur Auguste, the younger, was a little old man of eighty-three, wizened, but straight as a broomstick. He had a sort of nervous affection, which caused his head and limbs to shake, and made his speech one continuous tremolo.

The elder Ducoudray nearly always remained seated, his head and neck swathed in flannels and mufflers, while his brother circled convulsively about his chair, his little quivering head causing the

immense stovepipe which served him as headgear to vibrate in a truly alarming manner.

Nothing could be more unique than the conversation of these two old men, who were so devoted to one another that they could not be happy apart.

One day, being in the adjoining room, I overheard what they were saying, and made good use of it afterwards, *enfant terrible* that I was. The older Ducoudray was asking his brother Auguste about the visit to Angers which he made that morning.

"Where did you go, Auguste?" queried the old man, in his drawling voice, interrupted by little coughs.

"To Angers," exclaimed the explosive falsetto of Monsieur Auguste. "I walked through the Place du Pelican and passed the house of Mesdemoiselles Minet."

This name, it seems, awoke tender memories in the breast of the older man.

"Ah!" he replied in mournful tones, "Mesdemoiselles Minet! They were charming creatures, charming! They wore fresh flowers in their hair and on their gowns. They were charming! It was in 1802." Then after a pause, "Do you remember, Auguste?"

"Heavens, Ducoudray! Do I remember!" trumpeted forth the younger man.

Then his brother repeated several times, "They were charming. Charming. That was in 1802."

The Ducoudrays, the elder especially, prided them-

selves on being literary connoisseurs, and in spite of the revolutions, they continued to be faithful admirers of the great age. La Bruyère was the favorite author of Monsieur Antoine, his pet volume of which he kept always within reach. One day Mademoiselle Agathe, their housekeeper, was putting her master's room in order when she came across a copy of the *Caractères*, and read several passages, which, it appears, scandalized her exceedingly. She threw the book into the fire immediately, and when the old gentleman, after his little walk in the garden, searched in vain for his beloved book, and asked the housekeeper where she had put it, Mademoiselle Agathe's manner was so innocent that it was impossible to suspect her.

The same afternoon Marguerite went to see our venerable friends, and the housekeeper found an opportunity of confiding in her.

"Would you believe it, Mamzelle," she said in indignation, "I found an abominable book on Monsieur Ducoudray's table this morning. *Caractères*, by a certain Labourdinière. Perfectly horrid! I threw it in the fire, and he has been looking for it ever since."

Marguerite assured the respectable woman that she was alarmed without reason. She did not betray the confidence, but not long afterwards she sent as a present to Monsieur Ducoudray an edition of La Bruyère in large print, a delicate attention which touched our old friend very much.

And now we must pass on to Dr. Durand. He was a plant of the soil. His father and mother lived at Saint-Florent-le-Vieil before the great Revolution, and knew well my aunt's parents, Monsieur and Madame Dumoulin, of whom I spoke at the outset of these memoirs. Monsieur and Madame Durand were ardent Royalists, like most of the inhabitants of the country, and it was in bitter sorrow that they saw their son François embrace enthusiastically the cause of the Revolutionists. In 1793, when neighbors, friends and kinsmen were all joining the ranks of the Catholic and royal army, François went off to Angers, where he tendered his services to the Republic. At the same time he had no desire to shed the blood of his countrymen in Vendée, so he succeeded in being sent to the frontiers, where he fought the foreign foe. He took part in the principal campaigns of the Republic and of the Empire. In 1812 his wounds and ill-health contracted in the service forced him to resign. He had just reached the grade of Commandant. As his fortune was modest in the extreme, and he had a wife and children to support, he managed, by a great effort, to finish the course in medicine which he had begun as a young man, and established himself at Saint-Laurent, where, in spite of his reputation as a Revolutionist, he built up a practice sufficient for the needs of his family. Before long he lost his wife and his four children. But, as he loved his profession, he continued to practise, although his pension would have sufficed for his support.

My aunt, while she hated the doctor's principles, retained her affection for the old friend of her childhood, and it was most amusing to see these two survivors of by-gone days engage in violent discussions in the course of which each anathematized the principles defended by the other. My aunt would hurl at François Durand the tender epithets of "old rascal" and "Republican dog," while the doctor, fed in his youth upon the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau, saluted his dear friend by the gallant titles of "bigot," "visionary," "fanatic," and similar terms. Each week they parted vowing never to meet again, but the ensuing Thursday found them peaceably seated in the dining-room at Mesnil.

Doctor Durand was devoted to Marguerite, whom he called, in fun, his assistant. The truth is that she was a dangerous rival, but he was not jealous, for all that, for he loved her as his own daughter. My sister tried more than once to induce him to return to the practise of his religion, but he would shake his head and say, "Tut, tut, my little Guiguitte. A good deal of water will flow under the bridge of the Gemme before you get me into a confessional."

He was not impious. He believed in God and spoke His name with reverence, but his ignorance was something incredible. One day he undertook to prove to Marguerite that our Lord Jesus Christ had merely reproduced the teachings of Mahomet. Of course she had no trouble in cornering him, which caused him no little chagrin.

It is unnecessary to present the pastor of Saint-Laurent, since we have already made his acquaintance. Ordained priest at twenty-three years of age, in 1793, he was at once appointed assistant in the little parish of Saint-Jean-les-Douves, in the district of Cholet. He followed the Catholic and royal army throughout the campaign in Vendée and beyond the Loire, hearing confessions, preaching, marrying, celebrating the Holy Sacrifice in the depths of the forest and in caves, absolving the wounded in the midst of shot and shell, everywhere administering, at the peril of his life, the consolations of religion. After the pacification of the provinces of the West, he returned to his diocese and was made pastor of Saint-Laurent. For fifty years he had served that obscure parish, without any desire of leaving it, although the Bishops who had succeeded one another in the see of Angers had pressed him to assume a charge more in accordance with his abilities. He was adored by his parishioners, to whom he was really a father. He had known them from their earliest childhood, had baptized them, prepared them for the Sacraments, blessed their marriages and now watched over the spiritual interests of their children. We often got him to talk on Thursday evenings after dinner about the great and terrible events which he had witnessed in the early days of his priesthood. He spoke of them freely, always, however, keeping in the background the part, often an heroic one, which he himself played in the history of those gloomy times.

I will let him relate in his own words some of the tales which used to make the long winter evenings pass so quickly for us.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WHITES AND THE BLUES.

“**H**OW many acts of heroism I might put on record,” said Abbé Aubry, “if I only had the time and talent to set down my recollections. How many bright examples of faith, of charity, and of Christian fortitude I have witnessed!

“I knew well the famous Pierre Bibard of the town of Tessoualle,¹ who entered the army at the very outset of the insurrection. He fought like a lion in the first engagement at Fontenay, on May 13, 1793, and his courage carried him so far in advance that, covered with wounds, he fell into the hands of the enemy. The victorious Blues bore him off to Fontenay, and threw him into prison. For two weeks the Vendéan suffered a veritable martyrdom. The soldier who had him in charge treated him with the utmost cruelty, and abused him from morning until night, without the least regard for the pitiable condition to which his wounds had reduced him. While the second battle of Fontenay was going on, May 25th, this miserable wretch, unworthy of the name

¹The Marquise de la Rochejaquelein, Crétineau-Joly, and almost all the historians of the war of Vendée have recorded this incident.

of soldier, occupied himself by jabbing at the neck and breast of his prisoner with his bayonet and threatening to kill him if the 'brigands' should be victorious. Meantime the cannon roared at the very gates of the city, and the Royalists steadily gained ground. The guard went to the window to see what progress the enemy was making, and thoughtlessly left his gun within reach of the prisoner. Bibard saw his opportunity, and crawling softly toward the weapon of the Blue, promptly seized it, and leveled it at his jailor, saying coolly, 'If you move you are a dead man.' The terrified Republican did not dare to budge from his position, and Bibard succeeded in holding him at bay until the arrival of the Royalists, who rushed to the prison to release their captive comrades.

"Infuriated by the recent massacres committed by the Republican soldiers, the peasants seized the Blue and dragged him out to be shot,¹ in spite of the protests of Bibard. To please their comrade, however, they agreed to grant him an hour's respite.

"Meantime Pierre, whose desire was to save the man at all costs, sent to the commanding generals of the forces of Vendée, begging them to come to him. Delighted to hear that the brave Bibard, whom they knew well, was still alive, Henri de la Rochejaquelein d'Elbée, and Stofflet went at once to see him,

¹ The Vendéans very rarely indulged in reprisals. They almost always gave quarter to their enemies even when these latter had, by wholesale slaughter and other horrible crimes, richly deserved shooting.

and praised him for the courage he had shown on the battlefield.

“ ‘What do you want as reward?’ asked d’Elbée.

“ ‘The pardon of my jailor,’ was the prompt reply.

“So the pardon was granted at once and the Blue set at liberty.

“When Monsieur Henri¹ heard from his men of the cruel treatment which Bibard had received from the enemy, he sought him out again, embraced him, and said, ‘I would shed my blood willingly rather than have you act otherwise than you did to-day. Perhaps the Republicans will at last realize how they wrong us when they treat us as outlaws, and begin to believe that it is only for religion and for the king that we fight.’

“Then there was Ripoche,” continued Abbé Aubry. In him there were combined a simplicity and generosity of soul which approach the sublime. I will only touch upon his story, for it is well known throughout the country.²

“Ripoche was a poor wood-cutter, who earned his daily bread, and that of his little ones, by hard and continuous labor. The Blues surprised him one day, and dragged him to a Calvary,³ intending to shoot him there. The poor man begged them, in the name

¹ It was by this name that their leader, Monsieur Henri de la Rochejaquelein, was familiarly known to the peasants.

² The Rev. Father Delaporte, S.J., has commemorated in a beautiful poem, *La Croix du Bas-Briacé*, the sublime death of Ripoche. It may be found in *Récits et Légendes*, published by Retaux, rue Bonaparte, Paris.

³ Wayside crucifix. (Translator’s note.)

of Christ dying upon the cross, to spare his life for the sake of his wife and children.

“‘You can save your life,’ said the leader of the squad, ‘if you will chop down this cross.’

“‘Loose me, then,’ cried Ripoche, after thinking a moment.

“At a sign from the one in command, he was set free. Instantly the Vendéan seized his axe, and, setting his back against the Calvary, he shouted: ‘Come on, then, enemies of God!’

“The Blues rushed upon brave Ripoche with cries of rage, but he, swinging his axe, broke the force of the pikes and bayonets thrust at his breast, at the same time dealing terrible blows right and left with deadly effect upon the Republicans. Eight dead Blues lay around him, but by this time he himself was covered with wounds and his blood ran in streams.

“‘Give up, brigand,’ yelled the Blues.

“‘Give me back my God,’ replied the hero, and falling at the foot of the cross, he pressed his dying lips to the sign of his Redemption, and breathed forth his soul.

“Critics admire a famous passage in the Iliad,” Abbé Aubry said to us, “in which the poet describes Hector, the Trojan hero, as refusing to remove his helmet and drink the noble wine brought by the queen mother, Hecuba, because he would not seek refreshment himself while his comrades still labored in the fierce combat. It is indeed full of beauty and pathos,

but I have known the young men of our Vendée to do the same, only no great poet has immortalized their deeds.¹

“Charles and Étienne Leroux, aged eighteen and twenty years, of the farm called Le Frêne, in Saint-Jean-les-Douves—I knew them both well—² came back to their home one day, worn out after thirty-six hours of fighting and forced marches. Their mother and sisters, who had not known whether they were dead or alive, threw themselves into their arms and wept for joy.

“‘They must be terribly hungry, poor fellows,’ said their mother, and the whole family set to work to wait on them. The table was spread with the best the house afforded, the rare native wine, a great loaf of fresh bread, delicate rashers of bacon and a delicious cabbage soup, which had been simmering for hours, and had permeated the whole house with its odor. Seated by the fireside, the two youths already tasted in anticipation the welcome meal which would renew their strength and courage.

“Suddenly the sound of cannon and of musket-

¹ When shall a truly great poet arise from among us to celebrate that marvelous epoch which begins with the conscription at Saint-Florent, and closes amid the gloom of Savenay? Théodore Botrel, our Christian bard, Father Delaporte and others have in very beautiful verse described particular episodes of those heroic times; the death of Bonchamp, the “Pater noster” of d’Elbée, the martyrdom of Ripoché, etc. But it is not only scattered incidents, but the “War of Giants” as a whole that must be sung.

² Abbé Deniau in *La Guerre de la Vendée* cites a similar act on the part of a peasant called Marchand.

shots came to their ears, mingled with distant shouts, 'To arms, boys, to arms! The Blues! To arms! For religion and the king!'

"Charles and Étienne had not yet tasted the steaming broth before them. Electrified by the smell of powder, they leaped to their guns, stuffed their pockets with cartridges, kissed mother and sisters, who sought to detain them. 'We have no time!' they shouted. 'Our men are dying yonder!' and they shot forth in the direction from which the sound of fighting came.

"'Charlot! Tiennot!' cried their sisters, sobbing; 'come back, boys, you've not had a bite to eat!'

"But the mother, calm and resigned, although tears stole down her cheeks, said, 'Let them go. It is their duty, and duty is the voice of God!'

"The two brave fellows came home no more."

"Tell us about the women of Vendée," Marguerite said one evening to the good priest. "It strikes me that the historians of the great war give them only passing notice. If the men were heroes, I am certain that the women were not far behind them in faith, courage and devotion."

"You are right, my child," said Abbé Aubry. "The women were marvels during that terrible year, and I myself beheld many notable examples of self-sacrifice and Christian charity.

"During the first battle of Torfou, the troops from Basse-Vendée, disheartened by the repeated reverses of the preceding days, gave way before the army of

Mayence, which was, as you know, made up of the best soldiers of the Republic, and commanded by her most efficient officers. The precipitous flight of Charette's men threatened to involve the entire army in a general rout. At this juncture the women, who had been praying in the church at Torfou, hearing that the Royalists were retreating, poured out of the sacred edifice in a body, and seizing scythes, sickles, pitch-forks, anything they could lay their hands on, threw themselves with irresistible force against the enemy.

“‘Run, cowards!’ they shouted to their retreating countrymen. ‘We will go ourselves, and show you how to die!’

“The sight of sisters, wives and daughters marching on to meet the death they dared not face, shamed the men of Vendée. They came to a halt. The intrepid Charette, whose uniform had been pierced by no less than seven bullets, rallied his men, and led them once more to the charge. The armies of Anjou and Bas-Poitou followed suit, and soon the attack was renewed all along the line. Torfou was one of the most glorious victories won by our arms, and we ought openly to proclaim that had it not been for the courage of their women, the Royalists would have lost the day.

“It was not often, however, that the women of Vendée joined the combatants. There were, indeed, notable exceptions of whom it would be pleasant to speak, were it not, my dears, that I am afraid of

hurting the modesty of your aunt, my valiant friend; but, as a rule, the women of Vendée confined themselves to the sphere for which Providence designed their sex. During the combat they prayed the God of armies to yield the victory to their fathers, sons and husbands, and, the battle over, they prayed for the souls who had appeared before God's judgment-seat that day. They tended and encouraged the wounded, buried the dead, carried provisions and refreshments to the soldiers, and by their unfailing devotion renewed the faltering strength and failing spirits of all. It seems to me I can still hear the beautiful hymn they used to sing when their men marched to the front.

Je mets ma confiance,
 Vierge, en votre secours;
 Servez-moi de défense,
 Prenez soin de mes jours;
 Et quand ma dernière heure
 Viendra fixer mon sort,
 Obtenez que je meure
 De la plus sainte mort!
 Je mets ma confiance . . . , etc.¹

"This was the favorite hymn of the women of Vendée. It served them alike in victory and defeat.

¹ Blessed Virgin, in thy power
 All my confidence I rest.
 Be my help in danger's hour,
 Guard my life by foes oppressed.
 And when that dread day is nigh,
 On which my fate depends, O deign
 To pray for me that I may die
 A holy death, and heaven attain!

They sang it at Nantes in the prisons of Le Bouffay and the magazine where the ferocity of Carrier heaped up victims by the thousands. They chanted it to help them face death bravely in those horrible barges from which they were dropped into the Loire, or as they mounted, each in turn, the step of the scaffold, and the hymn only ended with the life of the last victim. I heard them myself—and I shall never forget it—I heard them singing this hymn one day when I had entered Nantes in disguise to try and visit the prisons. Standing at the foot of the scaffold I was able, without being detected, to give absolution to all the victims as they went to execution. Many of my own parishioners were among them. One of them recognized me as she passed. No one was looking our way at the moment, and she greeted me with a radiant smile. ‘Till we meet again,’ she seemed to say. ‘Do not weep for us. We are on our way to heaven!’

Je mets ma confiance
Vierge, en votre secours!

“They celebrated their triumph in anticipation, as it were, like martyrs of the primitive Church, and the pious chant, begun amidst the horrors of their martyrdom, was finished at the foot of the throne of our Lady, Help of Christians! Ah! children,” added the holy man, “I have never since been able to hear that hymn without shedding tears!

“After one battle a mother was told that her three sons had fallen.

“‘Did they do their duty?’ she asked simply. And when she was told that they died like brave men, facing the enemy and with the badge of the Sacred Heart on their breasts, she said, ‘I give them back to God, who gave them to me to avenge His glory.’¹

“After the bloody battle of Cholet a young mother with four children learned that her husband, her sole support, had been killed. As she was weeping bitterly, a friend said to her, ‘You may well weep, poor girl! You have really lost everything you had in the world.’

“The brave-hearted Christian raised her head. ‘No,’ she exclaimed, ‘I have not lost everything. I still have God and the memory of my husband’s courage. It may be that I have a great deal of suffering to undergo in this life, but I hope to reach heaven with my children.’

“I can never forget a pathetic scene which occurred on the evening of the day of the battle of Torfou. Two young persons of my parish, François Renaud and Jeanne Hubin, had been betrothed a few days before. Their parents had consented to the marriage, which was to take place after the war was over and the men had come home again.

“A few hours before the beginning of the battle, which would be a desperate one as every one knew, François came to say farewell to his beloved Jeanne.

¹This was the expression of a peasant, a cousin of Cathelineau, when announcing the death of the general to the men of Vendée assembled outside the house where he died. “Cathelineau has yielded up his soul to God, who gave it to him to avenge His glory.”

“ ‘Perhaps I shall be killed,’ he said, ‘and I wanted to see you once more.’

“ ‘Are you prepared, François,’ said the good girl, ‘are you ready to go before the presence of God?’

“ ‘Yes, Jeanne,’ replied the young man simply.

“ ‘God be praised!’ she said. ‘If you die I will hope that we meet in heaven;’ and, after a pause, ‘as for me, I promise that if you do not come back, I will never belong to any one else. I will give myself to the Good Lord and spend the rest of my life nursing the sick with the Sisters of La Sagesse at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre.’

“ ‘I was going to ask you that,’ said François in his simple faith. ‘And now pray that I do my duty, and for the rest, we will come together in God’s presence!’

“Four hours later the battle was won, and the army of Mayence was in retreat toward Nantes.

“Jeanne had been praying during the whole time the fight lasted, and now there came running in search of her a young man of the parish, a great friend of François.

“ ‘Jeanne,’ the young peasant said, ‘he is mortally wounded, and we have laid him yonder under the trees. He told me he would like to say good-bye to you.’

“The young girl hastened to the spot pointed out by the messenger. In a few moments she reached the wounded man, who was lying on a bed of heather already crimsoned with his blood. I was at that mo-

ment administering the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, which he received with edifying faith. Jeanne knelt down, sobbing, to pray. When the ceremony was over, the dying man turned his eyes to the young girl. 'Thank you for coming, Jeanne,' he said, with difficulty. 'I have a bullet in my breast, and I know I shall soon be gone. But you heard we won the fight? I fought hard. I kept up with Monsieur de Lescure¹ the whole time. And now it's all over. I have received the Sacraments, and I die in peace. But I have one thing to ask, Jeanne. Would you be willing before I die for us to be man and wife in the sight of God?'

" 'Yes, I am willing,' said Jeanne bravely. 'And when you are gone I will do as I told you, and I will pray for you every day as long as I live.'

" 'It is settled, then,' said François. Placing on Jeanne's finger the ring he had provided for their wedding, he murmured, 'Make haste. I feel I am going.'

"I got two of those present to act as witnesses, and, after hearing the vows of the young pair, I pronounced the nuptial benediction. A smile of happiness lit up the face of the dying man. He took his wife's hand and said faintly, 'Until we meet before God!' A little later François breathed forth his soul in the arms of his beloved Jeanne.

"The young wife prepared for burial the body of

¹ The Marquis de Lescure by his bravery decided the battle of Torfou.

the dear husband, who had left her a widow on her wedding day. She took careful note of the place where the body was interred, in the hope of having the precious remains carried back, when the war was over, to their old home. Poor Jeanne! She could not then foresee that the merciless revolutionary hordes were soon to complete their infernal work, and that before many weeks had passed the whole of Vendée would be naught but a smoking mass of ruins.

"The pious young girl remained faithful to the memory of her dear François, and as soon as circumstances permitted, she entered the convent at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvres, there to consecrate the remainder of her days to God in prayer and works of mercy. I myself had the privilege of giving her the veil.

"And now I will give you another instance of fortitude. What would you say to a mere child submitting to being cut to pieces by sabres rather than reveal the hiding-place of some soldiers of Vendée?

"Marie Papin, a young girl of fifteen, living in the village of N—, was one day carrying provisions to some wounded soldiers who had been safely hidden in the midst of a field of broom.¹

"Surprised by some Republican soldiers, Marie was taken before the officer commanding the detach-

¹ This incident is recorded by Father Deniau in his work entitled, *La Guerre de la Vendée*. Don Chamard in *Les Saints d'Anjou* relates a similar anecdote. A poor boy of Saint Florent allowed his limbs to be severed one by one from his body rather than betray a young deacon of whom the Blues were in search and whom they intended to kill.

ment, who demanded that she tell whom the food was for.

“ ‘For some poor hungry men,’ she replied.

“ ‘Where are they?’

“ ‘That I will not tell.’ ‘

“ ‘You take us immediately to where these brigands are hiding,’ thundered the Blue, in a rage.

“Marie did not flinch. Resting her innocent, open gaze upon the face of the officer, she said, ‘You may do what you please, but you cannot get me to betray those poor people.’

“ ‘Do as I say,’ roared the man, ‘or I will have you cut to pieces.’

“ ‘Whatever God wills,’ said Marie simply, and making the sign of the cross, she began to say her prayers, the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, and the acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

“Furious at being balked by a mere child, the Blues tied her to a tree and began to strike her with their sabres. The blood soon streamed from her wounds.

“ ‘Now, will you tell me where the brigands are?’ cried the officer once more.

“Marie did not answer, but went on with her prayers, ‘O my God, I give you my heart, my soul, and my body.—Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’

“The fury of the murderers now burst all bounds. The sight of blood had inebriated them. Like wild beasts they set upon the poor little body which was

already one great wound. Then, suddenly, as if seized with shame and terror at their work, they cut the bonds of the child, mounted their horses and disappeared at full speed, leaving their victim bathed in her blood.

"Two little boys of the same village who had gone a part of the way with Marie, and had hidden themselves on seeing the Blues, had watched in terror the sufferings of their companion. As soon as they saw the soldiers ride off, they ran to the place. Marie was still alive, and they heard her repeat in a faint voice, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those'—. A few moments more, and her innocent soul had returned to God."

"Those were great days," exclaimed my aunt, "but they do not make women that way nowadays. Three-fourths of our women in Anjou are good for nothing, and as for the men, it is useless to talk about them. They have even lost their faith."

"That," retorted Dr. Durand, who realized that he was the butt of the last remark, "is a sign that progress and civilization are making some headway against fanaticism in Anjou."

"Be still, you old miscreant! You will never be anything but a stupid heathen; that's plain!"

"Catherine, my friend, you will be a bigot to your dying day."

"You can safely swear to that, old rascal that you are!"

We were accustomed to occasional little inter-

ludes of this nature. They lent variety to the scene. The clouds never lasted long, and fair weather soon prevailed.

“It is undeniably true,” Abbé Aubry continued, “that thorough and consistent Christians are more rare in our days; but I can assure you that there are more of them than you imagine. Only yesterday one of my fellow-priests was telling me of an occurrence which took place five or six years ago, and which he himself witnessed. I tell it to you as proof that—God be praised!—faith and fortitude are not altogether extinguished in us.

“There lived in the district of Beaugé—I will not be more explicit for fear of being indiscreet—an honest farmer, father of a large family, which he supported by dint of hard toil. He would have been a model Christian man, were it not for one grave fault which counterbalanced all his good qualities. He got drunk every Sunday, and so drunk that he left all the sense he had in the bottom of the glass. When the fumes of the wine cleared away from his brain, he bitterly regretted his weakness, and asked pardon of his children for the bad example which he gave them. But in spite of good resolutions he did not succeed in overcoming this wretched habit.

“One Sunday morning after the first Mass, the time when he usually made his way to the wine-shop, Jean-Marie went in search of the pastor, who was making his thanksgiving in the sacristy.

“‘Monsieur le curé,’ said the man, ‘I have been

thinking a long time, and I just said to myself, you are going straight to hell; and so I made up my mind to make a vow before the Blessed Sacrament never to touch another drop of wine.'

" 'Don't do that, my friend,' said the priest, smiling. 'Make a resolution to perform a certain penance the next time you commit the sin of drunkenness. That's the best way. Don't make a hard and fast promise like that. You would not be able to keep it.'

" 'But,' urged the poor man, 'it seems to me that is the only way I can be saved. Without that I will never leave off drinking.'

" 'I cannot approve of your plan, my good man,' reiterated the priest. 'Make a firm resolution, but do not take a vow. It would not be prudent.'

"On general principles the pastor was most certainly right, but in this instance his parishioner must have been inspired by the Holy Ghost, as the sequel will show. So we must not blame either the shepherd or his sheep.

"Jean-Marie went back into the church, and on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament, he vowed never again to touch a drop of wine as long as he lived.

"Then the sturdy fellow started for home. Alas! He had not gone far before temptation overtook him. Passing the wine-shop, where he was accustomed to make his weekly visit, he was seized with a violent desire to stop.

"Acquaintances who saw him passing called out to know why he did not join them.

“‘I am in a hurry,’ said he.

“‘Oh, go on!’ cried the others, in bantering tones. ‘Has your wife been beating you, or is it the parish priest that has forbidden you to come in? Come on, old man, come in!’

“The temptation of human respect was added to that of drink. The peasant stopped, took two steps toward the inn, and then, suddenly controlling himself, muttered, ‘Jean-Marie, you must conquer or die!’ And turning his back on his amazed comrades, he strode on toward his farm.

“From that time on his life was one continual struggle. The object of his passion was ceaselessly before his mind.

“Every evening the poor man would make his children lock him up so he could not get to the cellar, and when he had to go to the village, and on Sundays returning from Mass, he would take long round-about ways to avoid passing the tavern. Some times when the temptation was more violent than usual he would have himself bound up, and in that humiliating and powerless position he would remain, until he had regained the mastery over himself.

“Jean-Marie lived twelve years after that, and during those twelve years only at rare intervals was he free from temptation, but he remained faithful unto death to his vow. What a bright crown,” added Abbé Aubry, “that generous Christian soul must now be wearing above! Is not his a glorious example of fortitude and of faith? Who will say now that these virtues are dead here in Anjou?”

“And I can give you another example occurring in a different grade of society. I will mention no names. There was a man in Nantes—by the way, they speak very harshly of the people in that part of the country. The citizen of Nantes was rich and honored in his native city. He and his wife brought up their children in an exemplary manner, and theirs was a Christian family in the full sense of the word.

“One day this good man, irritated by something, I know not what, allowed a blasphemous expression to escape him in the presence of his children and of his servants. The act was not deliberate, certainly, and did not constitute a grave sin, but the Christian father, head of his household, realized as soon as he had regained his self-possession that he had given scandal. He resolved to make reparation at once for his disedifying example, and to punish himself in presence of the whole family.

• “At the dinner hour, when the children were already gathered in the dining-room, the father whispered something in his wife’s ear, and she, nodding assent, went into the servants’ hall, returning presently, followed by all the domestics. When all were present, Monsieur N—— said, ‘Children, and you, too, my friends, I set you a bad example to-day. I so far forgot myself as to take the Holy Name of God in vain, and that, too, in your presence. I ask God’s pardon and yours and in proof of my sorrow I am ready to do penance.’ Whereupon this man, who was animated by the true Christian spirit, con-

quered his human respect, and got down on his knees to take his dinner. His wife, his children and even his servants wept. Seeing the father in this humiliating attitude no one else had the courage to sit down, and they all got on their knees. It appears that the same was done in the servants' hall.

"This was told me by the Rev. Father R., who was an intimate friend of the family.

"The name of that cleric reminds me of an amusing adventure of which one of his brother priests was the hero. This story will be interesting to the young people. Do you like stories, Paul?"

"Not all, Monsieur le curé. I like funny stories—very funny stories."

"You do! Well, I hope this one will meet with your approval.

"This event occurred toward the close of the great war, in the spring of 1793.¹ Abbé Terrien, who has been dead for some years, was at that time pastor of the parish of Challain. He had been but recently ordained, and was only twenty-three years of age. His youthful figure and almost child-like expression of countenance would make one think he was barely eighteen. Compelled, like most of his fellows, to hide in order to avoid persecution, he took refuge in a large farm in a neighboring parish, where he sought employment as a shepherd.

"Master Rochard, the farmer, was the only one

¹ Father Deniau in *La Guerre de la Vendée* briefly cites the same incident.

in his confidence. 'Whatever you do, Father, said he, 'don't breathe a word of who you are to a soul; not to the boys and girls, but above all not to my wife. She is a good Christian woman, and if she knew who you were, she'd never have done with her curtsies; but, Lord! she is a bit boastful, and she would be so tickled at having a priest in the house that all the good wives in the neighborhood would know it before night; and then, supposing there was a Republican dog among them, which might very well be, she would betray you.'

"So it was decided that the secret should be kept and that for all but the farmer the assistant priest of Challain would pass for a simple shepherd boy.

"The priest, who was of a jovial disposition, undertook to play his part in a finished manner, and to disarm suspicion by the appearance of stupidity, which he could assume to perfection.

"He had been several days at the farm of Grand-Vernon, when Mistress Rochard, who was an excellent woman and keenly alive to her duty as the mother of a family, bethought herself that her shepherd boy might need instruction in his catechism.

"'Pierre,' she said to him one morning, 'come and let me hear if you can say your prayers and your catechism before you take the sheep to pasture.'

"'If you like, Mistress,' answered the priest, stolidly.

"'Begin your Our Father, then, so I can tell whether you know it.'

“ ‘Very well, Mistress.’

“ ‘Well, begin, then!’

“ ‘The young shepherd commenced the Lord’s Prayer, but after the first few words he faltered, stopped, began over again, stopped once more, and finally dropped his head in confusion, while the farmer’s wife regarded him with the most pitying expression on her face.

“ ‘You poor boy, you do not even know your Our Father! How old are you? Sixteen at the very least, I am sure!’

“ ‘Yes, Mistress.’

“ ‘Isn’t that shameful! Who taught you?’

“ ‘The Reverend Fathers, Mistress.’

“ ‘Then you must be very stupid?’

“ ‘Yes, Mistress, very.’

“ ‘The good creature then set to work to teach her little shepherd the Lord’s Prayer. She made him repeat each word over and over, then each phrase. The poor boy made every effort to learn his lesson, but in vain. By the time he had learned the last words he had completely forgotten the first.

“ ‘Mistress Rochard finally gave up in despair. ‘You’re a stupid goose, and always will be!’ she cried, out of patience.

“ ‘And she gave the young shepherd a good box on the ear.

“ ‘Go out to the pastures,’ she said, ‘your sheep could learn their Our Father quicker than you.’

“ ‘Very well, Mistress,’ said the priest placidly,

and he proceeded to lead his flock into the meadows.

“Meantime the Holy Sacrifice was to be celebrated the next night in the heart of the forest,¹ about a league distant from the farm of Grand-Vernon, by a priest who was in hiding in the neighborhood. Mistress Rochard was informed of the fact by her husband, and she in turn notified her neighbors, cautioning them well not to say a word on the subject before the young shepherd. ‘He is so stupid,’ she said, ‘that likely as not he would go round telling everybody. Not for meanness; he’s too simple for that; but that would not mend matters, and it is safest to say not a word to him about it.’

“The following night a crowd of peasants from the farms and hamlets of the vicinage made their way toward the meeting-place. In a large clearing in the forest an altar had been erected under a canopy of boughs in the rear of which the celebrant was putting on the priestly vestments. Armed men stood on the outskirts of the forest.

“In the front row of the congregation was Mistress Rochard, absorbed in her devotions. As the priest passed before her on his way to the altar she started in amazement. The clergyman bore such a striking resemblance to her shepherd boy that one might have sworn that he was he! But what a notion, what nonsense! A child who did not even

¹ According to another version the Mass was not celebrated in the woods, but at a farm-house near Andrézé.

know his Our Father! And yet, if it were not he, it certainly must be his twin!

“Wide-mouthed, and unable to believe her eyes, the good woman approached the altar to within a few feet of the celebrant. There is no doubt about it, it is he! It is the little shepherd boy who is saying Mass! Mistress Rochard went back to her place in a state of great excitement. ‘But how can it be?’ she kept repeating to her neighbors. ‘How is he to say Mass, when he does not even know his prayers?’

“When the services were over, and the priest was removing his vestments behind the altar the good woman came up to him, her face crimson with mortification, and dropping on her knees, she said, ‘Forgive me, Father, for having spoken disrespectfully to you and above all for striking a consecrated priest in the face! But, Lord! Why wouldn’t you say your prayers?’ ”

With these and many other tales, which it would fail me to repeat, did our good pastor entertain us, and the evenings passed so quickly that the hour for departure always came too soon.

At half-past nine the carriages “blocked the way.” The Hardy family got into their vehicle, the notary always serene, Madame Hardy always sighing, Mademoiselle Adèle always grumbling. The pastor and his assistants drove back to the presbytery to the sound of Coco’s measured gait. The doctor lit his pipe, bestrode his grey mare, and dis-

appeared at a trot. The two Ducoudrays, carefully wrapped up by their housekeeper, 'ensconced themselves in the depths of their barouche, Zidore cracked his whip, and the mule started down the avenue, jingling the little bells on the harness.

And so it was every Thursday of the year.

PART III.

THE SCHOOL BOY.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOL, IN THE WOODS.

UP to the age of twelve I was very obedient. My sister did just as she pleased with me. My affection and respect for her were so great that when I was tempted to do wrong, a word or even a sign from her or the look of sadness in her eyes was sufficient to reduce me to order. But this was too good to last. As I grew older, pride and the desire for independence began to manifest themselves and, without ceasing to love my sister dearly, I began to dispute her authority, and occasionally to override it. Soon I entered into open revolt, and solemnly announced that it was "beneath my dignity to obey a girl any longer."

"You know very well, Guiguite," I said grandly, "that you women were not made to rule men." (With what stress I emphasized the words *you women!*) "It ought to be just the opposite. I don't try to order you about, and the least you can do is to give me equal rights. You needn't think you can lead me around like a sheep any longer. This thing has been going on long enough already."

About this time my piety began to diminish. Once in a while I would omit my prayers. I did not go to confession so often, although I was very much in earnest when I did go. By a great grace, however, the continuance of which it would be presumptuous to expect, God kept me from mortal sin during this period of my life.

In order to correct my indolence and insubordination, Marguerite adopted toward me an attitude of severity. Doubtless her reproaches were well merited, but they offended my self-love, and I replied with such intolerable arrogance that she was forced to punish me. Then I would fly into a rage or relapse into sullen, bitter silence which was worse than anger, for the evil feelings pent up in my heart threatened to raise an insurmountable barrier between us who, up to that time, had been united by the most tender affection. Marguerite soon realized the danger, and concluded that under the circumstances severity was a remedy worse than the evil. After that she punished me no more, but simply let me see how deeply grieved she was by my conduct. The poor child was certainly much distressed and worried by my behavior at that time, but what troubled her most was the very grave danger which in the near future was sure to threaten one who was by nature so keen after pleasure, so intensely eager for freedom and so impatient of restraint.

I learned afterwards that during this critical period of my life Marguerite constantly prayed for me.

When I saw her weep, I would throw my arms around her neck and cry, too. "Ah," I would say, "that's the way to manage me. If only you were always kind, I would do whatever you say." Then I would beg her pardon, as I used to do when I was little, promise to work hard, get all my tasks, and mind what she said. This would last one day or perhaps two. Then the good impression would wear off, and I would begin my capers once more.

My aunt did not regard this matter in so serious a light as she should have done.

"Pshaw!" she would say to Marguerite. "When all's said and done, he is a man. His body must develop, his will get strong,¹ and his energy have free play. Boys have to run risks. That's what makes them hardy. Paul will turn out a real man of Vendée. I am sure of it!"

The good soul was imprudent enough occasionally to express herself after this fashion in my presence, which, it may well be understood, did not serve in any way to strengthen Marguerite's authority.

I was only twelve years old, but daily outdoor exercise on foot and on horse-back, the wholesome air of Mesnil and Rose's excellent cooking had so developed me in size and strength that I looked like a vigorous youngster of fifteen. I was wild about hunting, fishing, and all sorts of field sports, and I

¹ As if pride and insubordination would strengthen the will! It is the mastery of self acquired by obedience practised in a spirit of faith, which makes strong characters.

used to slip off without permission early in the morning, my rifle swung over my back. If the doors were locked, I would jump out of the window, first purloining some provisions from the pantry. That would be the last of me for the whole day. I came in at unheard-of hours, long after dark, sometimes, without the least thought of the anxiety which my long absence had caused Marguerite.

About a league from Mesnil, in a little hut on the banks of the Gemme, there lived an old peasant who, in spite of his seventy-five years, was as hardy and vigorous as in his prime. In 1793, Julien Courteau, then only sixteen, enlisted with the volunteers of Monsieur de Bonchamp, and fought in the great war for God and the King until the time of Charrette's death. He was a widower with no children, and made his living with the aid of his traps and gun. He was the most skilful poacher in the country. He was so wily in throwing the police and game-keepers off the scent, that these respectable agents of law and order had never been able to lay their hands on him. Just as they thought they had him, he would disappear like a phantom and with a swiftness and dexterity which savored of the preternatural.

Old Courteau honored me with his friendship. I often went to see him in his hut, and he initiated me into the secrets of his craft. He taught me to discover the hiding-places of the game, to choose the best localities to lurk in, where we would some-

times lie in wait half the night; to stretch snares at night-fall, and to find the favorite haunts of the trout which peopled the limpid waters of the Gemme. In winter, we would go down the river in a little boat, which in two hours time would bring us to the Loire. There, hidden among the reeds, we would shoot on the wing the sea-fowl or wild ducks which flew low over the neighboring islands on cold mornings in December, piping their shrill notes. I had grown to be so expert that I never missed the quarry at a hundred yards with the big duck gun of Courteau. "Bravo, Monsieur Paul!" the old poacher would say at every fresh deed of prowess on the part of his pupil, and I would thrill with pride and pleasure as our faithful dog, Toutou, threw himself bravely into the water to search amid the floating ice for the game which had fallen at my shot. This life of adventure was very fascinating, and made the study of Cicero and Virgil seem more and more tame.

I had always concealed my relations with Courteau from my sister, for she had positively forbidden me to go and see him. He was, to be sure, a good-hearted old fellow with perfectly correct habits (I never heard an improper expression from his lips), but the intimacy was of no benefit to me, for it increased my love of independence and my distaste for mental exertion. Moreover, my chosen mentor did not hesitate to set me the example of lying. If Marguerite, who had her suspicions, tried

to make an unexpected visit to the poacher's cabin, the old man, who was ever on the look-out, always warned me in time. "Hide, Monsieur Paul! Mamzelle is coming after you," and he would push me into a sort of cupboard, so deceptively built in the wall that Guitte never realized that she was sitting within a few feet of the hiding place of "le petit gars."

To all of Marguerite's questions he would reply with an innocent air, "I have not seen Monsieur Paul, Mamzelle. It may be he went by here, but I never saw him. I don't know where he is."

Up to that time Marguerite had always been able to read my eyes, which as well as my words expressed truly what was going on in my mind. The example of old Courteau gradually instilled the habits of deceit and falsehood, which are so ignoble and so dangerous.

While I was charmed with the exciting expeditions which I made in company with the old woodsman, I was if possible still more delighted in listening to the tales he told me in his peasant dialect, full, it is true, of barbarisms and solecisms, but so vivid and picturesque! Having served under Bonchamp, Rochejaquelein, and Charette, he had taken part in the mighty and terrible events of that time, which lived again by the striking reality of his description. I may be allowed to reproduce some of the narrations of the veteran, the arbitrary syntax and quaint imagery of whose style I shall as far as possible respect.

With what emotions of affection and regret did the brave soldier revive the memory of his comrades in arms, and especially his commanders, who had so many times met and overcome the picked armies of the Republic, and forced her most illustrious generals to retreat!

This is how he spoke of Bonchamp, who was his first commanding officer.

"I was only fifteen and a half," he began, "when I saw all the boys at home going up to the château of Baronnière. That's where Monsieur le Marquis de Bonchamp lived with his lady and his two little girls. They were going to get him to lead them against the Blues. I was out at service then with Viaud, who was one of his tenants. 'Are you going, Julien?'—Julien is just my name, Monsieur Paul. 'Are you going along?' said they as they passed by. That was Jaques and Pierre Robineau of the town of Liré, who were my own cousins, because their mother was sister to mine. 'Aren't you ashamed!' Mistress Viaud said to them, 'to want to take a child like that with you! He is barely sixteen. Go you, if you want to, but don't try to take Julien along!'

"And so the boys went off, and the farmer's wife double-locked the door before she went out to the fields, so I could not get out, and she even shut the outside shutters to keep me from getting out the window. Viaud himself had gone up to the Baronnière with the rest.

"I watched through a crack in the door until the farmer's wife was well out of the way, and then I said to myself, 'I have got to go too, just the same!'

"I was sickly enough in those days. I was little, very little, not big a bit, so that my mother, when I was home, used to send me up the chimney to knock down the soot, and she called me her little chimney-sweep. So then I said to myself, 'The farmer's wife has locked the door, and barred the windows, but she never stopped up the chimney.' So I set to work to crawl up. Climb, then, climb away! And in climbing I knocked the soot full into the kettle of soup, which had been simmering since morning. Never fear! They ate it all the same!

"So I got to the top of the chimney, and then slid down the roof, which came nearly to the ground, and then made off for Baronnière.

"When I got there I found the court-yard full. 'You here, Julien?' said Viaud to me. 'What makes your face so black? You look as if you had just come out of the oven.'

"'Lord, Master! The Mistress put me under lock and key to keep me from running away, so I had to climb the chimney, and here I am.'

"'You did right, boy. The Mistress is entirely too soft-hearted.'

"While we were waiting in the court-yard, the great door opened, and Madame la Marquise came out to the men, and told them to go back to their homes; that they would be the cause of great mis-

fortunes in the land, if they persisted in gathering together like that and that her husband would not lead them on to slaughter.

“ ‘Slaughter for slaughter, Madame la Marquise,’ replied Viaud, ‘I would rather we died fighting than murdered in our homes like rats, with all respect to you.’

“ ‘That’s the truth,’ said all the men, and they began to shout, ‘Monsieur le Marquis, we want Monsieur le Marquis!’ They made such an uproar you could not hear yourself think.

“I could see Madame la Marquise did not like it at all, and she began to weep and weep, and she hid her face in her handkerchief and went back into the château. Then Monsieur le Marquis came out himself by the great door, and he spoke like this: ‘You wish it then, boys! Well, it may be madness, but it shall never be said that my peasants die for their religion, while I stay here and warm my feet. Come on, then! For our religion! Long live the King!’

“And you should have heard the men shout! Thunder is nothing to it!

“Then Monsieur le Marquis went back, and pretty soon he came out again with a white scarf on, a white band on his hat, two pistols in his belt and his great sword in his hand. We all followed him, some with sickles, some with pikes, others with their hunting guns, but nothing to put in them. ‘Don’t worry about that, boys,’ said Monsieur le Marquis, ‘If we have no cartridges, the Blues have, and we

will have them too when we take them out of their pockets.'

"So then we started.

"There was young Huchet of the village of Sorinière, who came with us because he thought they would not really go, but when he saw that every one was going, he went, too—only he went the wrong way! That Huchet was a worthless chap, any way, Monsieur Paul."

Don't you think there is something vivid, picturesque and very characteristic in the simple, humble manner in which he expressed himself?

Another time my old friend described the death of his general.

"We had been beaten down at Cholet like grain before the wind. We were hurrying to cross the Loire at Saint-Florent. Girls and boys, old and young, old men and women, horses, oxen and cows, *everybody* was trying to get over.

"We had five thousand prisoners with us, and we did not want to leave them behind. They would have taken our guns and fired on us. They had done it often enough before, the scoundrels! Ah, well! May their souls rest in peace. I wish it with all my heart!

"And now old Monsieur Cesbron,—yes, he was the man, Cesbron of Argonne, who was in command of the boys who were guarding the Republican prisoners, shouted to us to kill them all before we crossed the river. 'They must be stamped out, boys,' he

said, 'they must be stamped out! They are a bad lot. They are vermin! These are the men who have killed your wives and children, murdered the King, carried off your cattle, set fire to your villages. Death to the Blues, death, I say!'

"Then the men all thundered, 'Death! Death to the Blues!' And the miserable prisoners began to weep and wail, and to offer us all the gold and silver they had, but no one would look at it.

"The officers tried hard to persuade us not to do away with them, but we would not listen. As for me, Monsieur Paul, my mother had been stabbed by a Blue, and my little sister trampled to death under the horses' feet, where she had been thrown on purpose, and I wanted their blood. I would have liked to have all the Blues in my shoes and stamp them to death with one blow.

"Then we put them all in the church at Saint-Florent, and it was as full as if it were Easter day, only this time it was not good Christians that crowded it! And then we trained two cannon on the great door of the church, and charged them to the muzzles, and shouted to the gunners, 'Fire, boys, fire!! Death to the Blues! Death to the murderers! Fire!'

"Now you must know that our general, Monsieur le Marquis, had been wounded at Cholet two days before by a ball in the stomach, and he was lying as though dead, and had not said a word since the evening before. But now he woke up a little, all of

a sudden, and said to Monsieur d'Autichamp, his aide-de-camp, who was with him, 'Charles! What are the men shouting like that for?' And really we were making noise enough to wake the dead. 'They are going to kill the Blues,' said Monsieur d'Autichamp. 'Horrible!' he said. 'The fair name of our Vendée will be gone forever! See here, my friend,' he said to Monsieur d'Autichamp, 'this is the last order you will ever carry for me. I am going to die soon. Go tell my soldiers from me that I forbid them to attempt the life of a single Blue; that I am dying; that soon I shall appear in the presence of the Good Lord, and that I wish to carry with me the pardon of the Blues, so He will receive me into Paradise. Make haste, my friend, while there is still time!'

"And now comes Monsieur d'Autichamp, all out of breath just as we were setting off the cannon, and he told us just what Monsieur le Marquis said to tell us.

"And first everything was so still for a minute you could have heard a fly move. Then two or three began to say, 'Mercy for the Blues! Monsieur le Marquis wants it. We are Christians, anyway!' And then everyone began to shout the same, and I who had vowed to avenge my mother and sister and to kill every Blue I could catch, there I was, too, with a changed heart, giving up my revenge. 'Let's forgive them,' I said, 'so the Good Lord will forgive us, too!'

"We went into the church and told the Blues what had happened. My, but they were glad! There were some who went crazy and shouted 'Long live the King!'

"Some of them fired on us afterwards when we were crossing the river. Ah, well! I guess the Good Lord caught them!"

When he spoke of Rochejaquelein, the enthusiasm of the old peasant was unbounded.

After the death of Bonchamp, Julien presented himself to the young commander, who was so favorably impressed with his fine bearing, his courage, and his address that he took him into his service.

"I followed him everywhere," said Courteau proudly. "I had charge of his horses, burnished his sabre, his guns, and his pistols, did everything for him. That man was the bravest of the brave. There were not two like him, I am certain, in the whole land of France!

"At Saumur the men did not attack with a will, because the Blues had made holes in the walls, and put cannon behind them which poured shot into our ranks. When Monsieur Henri saw that the men were afraid to go on, he took his great chapeau with the white cockade, and threw it on top of the wall. 'Who will get it for me?' he said, and all the men began to jump and scramble and climb to the top. Everyone said to himself, 'I'll be the one to get M'sieu Henri's chapeau for him.' Whew! It was himself who got there first, and the devil

couldn't have done it quicker! He put on his chapeau, and ran along the wall helping the men up, and soon the Blues were running in every direction. Lord! there was a man that *was* a man! And didn't I love him, M'sieu Henri! With all that, he was not the least bit proud. Many a time I have seen him, in place of taking his breakfast with the officers, who had a mess to themselves, come over to us where we were eating, and say, 'Any room for me, men?' You should have seen how pleased the men were to have M'sieu Henri with them! Every mother's son of them would have taken the bread out of his mouth to give it to M'sieu Henri!

"Ah, but the Blues would have liked to kill him! You know, Monsieur Paul, that M'sieu Henri, to tantalize the Blues, tied Cholet handkerchiefs—you know the Cholet handkerchiefs were bright red, and you could see them a long way off—well, M'sieu Henri fastened them in his hat, round his neck and in his belt, so that the Blues could always see him. They would have given more than a thousand crowns to catch him.

"'M'sieu Henri,' we said, 'take off those handkerchiefs. The Blues will see nothing but you!' He only laughed! 'Do you think, boys, that I am going to hide from the Blues? It will take more than Blues to make me put away my handkerchiefs!'

"When we heard that, we said to each other, 'That will never do. M'sieur Henri is bound to be picked off, sooner or later. If he won't listen to us,

we'll all follow suit!' So all the boys fastened Cholet handkerchiefs in their hats so that the Blues could not tell which was M'sieu Henri! When he saw that, he laughed and said, 'That's not fair!'"

Listening to old Courteau, one is reminded of the spirited ballad of Botrel, "Les Coquelicots." My readers will thank me for reproducing it.

LES COQUELICOTS.¹

(Fragment.)

La Rochejaquelein, le héros de Vendée,
M'sieur Henri, "l'intrépide," ainsi qu'on l'appelait,
Nouait à son chapeau, son col et son épée
Trois mouchoirs rouges de Cholet.

Il avait des yeux bleus où rayonnait son âme
Un front pur; il avait vingt ans, des cheveux d'or.
Il était doux et bon, tendre comme une femme,
Brave comme un Campéador.

Il tirait son épée et l'on entraît en danse,
Aux cris de: "Vive Dieu, ses Prêtres et son Roi!"
Il disait à ses gars: "Suivez-moi si j'avance:
Si je recule, tuez-moi!"

Et tous les gars suivaient ce coq à rouge crête:
On passait où passait La Rochejaquelein
Car d'Elbée et Lescure, et Stofflet et Charette
Avaient dit: "C'est un Duguesclin!"

.

Or les "Bleus," las de voir ces "Brigands" invincibles
Conduit par cet enfant, poussèrent un long cri:
"Ne visons que le chef!" et choisirent pour cible
Les trois mouchoirs de "M'sieur Henri."

¹ See appendix for translation.

Aussitôt bourdonnant ainsi que des abeilles
Butineuses de sang—de sang jeune qui bout—
Les balles des fusils chantèrent aux oreilles
De "M'sieur Henri" toujours debout.

Les Vendéens criaient: "C'est vous seul que l'on guette:
Tirez donc vos mouchoirs, ohé la! M'sieur Henri!
Tirez au moins c'ti-là qu'est dessus votre tête,
Ou vous allez être péri!"

Et l'enfant répondait en riant: "Qu'est-ce à dire?
Me dégrader? Jamais! Me cacher? Que non pas!
C'est un immense honneur que d'être un point de mire:
Si je meurs, vengez-moi, les gars!"

Ceux-ci firent alors une chose splendide!
Ces héros en sabots, ces rustres valeureux,
Pour sauver celui-là qu'ils nommaient l'Intrépide
Attirèrent la Mort sur eux:

Sous le feu, chacun prit dans sa petite veste,
Dans ses brayes de toile ou son bissac de peau,
Un mouchoir de Cholet—un mouchoir rouge—et, preste,
Se l'attacha sur le chapeau!

Et les "Bleus" ébahis de voir, à la seconde,
Tant de chefs qui s'offraient au feu de leurs flingots,
Cherchaient en vain l'épi de blé, la paille blonde
Dans ce champ de coquelicots!

How these fine lines of the Breton poet, recalling
the glories of the past, stir the blood, and rouse one
to enthusiasm!

"Ah!" continued Courteau, "Brave M'sieu
Henri! He could give it to those Republicans. At
Entrammes, on the other side of the Loire, not far
from Laval, he almost destroyed the army of May-
ence. And then at Dol! What a night that was,

Monsieur Paul! I shall remember it as long as I live. If it had not been for M'sieu Henri, we would have been lost! He fought, mind you, thirty-six hours running, without eating a morsel. He changed horses seven times. Two fell under him, killed by bullets, and the others were worn out, because he worked them so hard, galloping from one end of the field to the other incessantly. We fought that time seven hours after dark, and you could hardly tell friend from enemy. Sometimes we took cartridges from the same caisson, first the Blues, and then our men. We saw only by the light of the firing. But, Lord! You could tell a Republican by the way they profaned the name of God. Our men never swore.

"A Blue and I ran into one another, and neither one knew who the other was.

" 'Who are you?' I said.

" 'Who are you yourself?' answered he, cursing like a heathen.

" 'He's a Blue for sure,' I said, and I drew my sword across his throat. Many a one died like that.

"The Blues lost so many men that when they found it out next morning, they ran in every direction. M'sieu Henri followed them up for two hours, capturing the cannon which, in order to get away faster, they left behind.

"After that he had breakfast off a piece of bread and some boiled potatoes that I got from the good people around there, who were friendly to us. Poor

things! They would have given us more, but it was all they had!

"Poor M'sieu Henri! And to think that he should have died so young and just when he had come back to his own country!

"The army was done for. There was no more Vendée! M'sieu Henri had crossed back again over the Loire with Monsieur Stofflet and two or three hundred men. He still worried the Blues for five or six weeks. But one day he ran into two Republican dragoons in a narrow lane. 'Surrender!' he said, 'You will not be harmed.' One of them threw down his gun. The other said, 'I surrender,' and held out his musket as if to give it up. M'sieu Henri went up to take it, when the Blue, who still held the gun by the stock, stepped back a little, aimed at M'sieu Henri's heart, and laid him stark dead at one shot. I killed the Republican with my sabre, you may be sure, but the other one I let off, because it was not his fault. But that did not bring back M'sieu Henri.

"After that," Courteau went on, "I went with Monsieur Stofflet. He was brave, too. I don't say he wasn't. But he was not like M'sieu Henri, and when he had Monsieur de Marigny shot, I left him, and so did a good many men from our part of the country, because we knew the Good Lord was not with him. Then we went to Monsieur de Charette. And he was a real general! The Blues were so afraid of him that they wanted to make peace, and

he went into Nantes with four hundred of his soldiers. I was only two paces from him. He wore his white cockade in his chapeau, and all the people ran out to see him.

“But after all they betrayed him. If it hadn’t been for that, they never would have taken him. Then the Blues took him to Nantes again to shoot him. They marched him about the streets all day to show him off, they were so glad they had no more to fear from him. He could hardly drag himself around on account of three wounds which he had lately got. But he faced them with such an air that not one dared look him in the eye! Then next morning they took him out to the Place Viarmes to shoot him, and Monsieur de Charette, when he passed by No. 3, on the Rue du Marchix, looked up and said his *Confiteor*, because he had been told that a priest would be there at the window to give him absolution. And I did see an old man dressed like a salt-maker, who made the sign of the cross over him as he went by.

“They started to blind-fold him. ‘What do you take me for?’ he said, and he gave the word to the men who were to shoot him in a voice that you could hear, Monsieur Paul, as far as the Place Bretagne. ‘Long live religion! Long live the King!’ he cried, and then gave the signal to fire. And so he died, poor Monsieur de Charette!

“I loved him, too, but not the same as M’sieu Henri!”

The tales of Courteau fired me with war-like desires.

"Come on," said I, one day after he had finished a most exciting narration. "Let's go and capture the police station at Saint-Laurent. We two can easily get the better of the three men there, and we will put the mayor in prison, if he resists. Then we'll call all the peasants around to arms, and begin the great war over again, and this time we'll go as far as Paris."

The old hunter shook his head.

"That would do very well in old times, Monsieur Paul, but nowadays the men are not the same as they were in my time. If we should do that, no one would come with us. I should lose my head, and as for you, they would shut you up until you are twenty-one. There's no use trying it."

For the time being I relinquished my plan of operation against the police-station at Saint-Laurent, and indulged my bellicose propensities by making war upon the wild ducks.

This life of freedom and adventure was wonderfully satisfying, and I was willing to have it continue indefinitely, but I had reached the end of my tether, and very soon I was to be hauled up short.

One evening in October I returned to Mesnil after having spent the entire day away from home. I was completely tired out and hungry as a bear, but all smiles, for I had shot my first rabbit, which I carried proudly over my shoulders. As I passed

through the kitchen, Cillette told me that my brother Charles had come that morning, that Lucie was not with him, and he and Marguerite were by themselves in the parlor. I was only half pleased to hear of Charles' coming. Not that I was not fond of him, but he was my guardian, and I knew he would reprove me. I at once suspected that my sister had instigated his visit, and I augured nothing good from it. However, I went into the parlor, swinging my rabbit to keep my courage up.

Charles received me coldly. Marguerite and he looked sad.

"You have been behaving very badly, my dear boy," said Charles, quietly. "Your sister is perfectly right in being displeased with you for your disobedience and idleness. It is high time some authority was asserted over you. To-morrow I am going to take you to Lyons and put you in school there. Go, get your dinner, and go right to bed. We must start at five o'clock."

I was in the depths. The idea of losing the freedom which was so dear to me was dreadful indeed. But I did not dare say a word. Charles spoke in a tone which was new to me, and which did not admit of dispute. Marguerite, whose eyes were red from weeping, had not spoken to me at all. I left the room with my unlucky rabbit, which had not won for me the slightest complimentary remark. I went back to the kitchen, and sat down at the end of the table to eat the stew which old Rose had ready for

me. I am sure she had dropped many a tear over it, for she cried as if her heart would break, when she heard I was to leave in the morning. Cillette and Lexis stood in front of me in wide-eyed astonishment. All this did not tend to make me very cheerful. Besides, I knew very well that I had gone too far, and I dreaded some severe retribution. As I was not yet bad at heart I felt very keenly Charles' distress and, above all, the suffering which poor Guitte must undergo. These sad thoughts overwhelmed me, and I wept bitterly half the night, but as I was very weary after the day's expedition, I finally dropped off into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER X.

THE COLLEGE.

THE next morning at half-past four—it was Thursday, the tenth of October, 1854, I will never forget the date—Charles came up to wake me. He had to make several attempts before I was roused, for I was sleeping very heavily. The long tramp of the previous day, and the grief which had kept me awake half the night, had quite exhausted me. When I did awake, it was to the consciousness of the sad reality, and I once more began to weep bitterly. Marguerite had not gone to bed at all. She had worked all night long, marking my linen and preparing my clothes. Sorrow and fatigue had quite altered her usual appearance. Her affection for her unruly brother was so deep and tender that nothing but the conviction of her imperative duty in the matter could have induced her to part with him. How very dear I cost her!

I realized perfectly that she was doing herself violence in agreeing to this separation, and I made one last effort.

“If you love me, why do you send me away?” I said, clinging with my arms around her neck.

"If you had been good, I would not have let you go for anything in the world. But it is God's will. It is my duty. There is no use in your persisting."

She spoke with such energy and firmness that I saw the matter was settled beyond recall. Then in revenge I sulked, and obstinately refused to eat anything, though everyone begged and implored me to do so.

My aunt was displeased and disappointed. She was proud of me because I was strong and hearty, enterprising and fearless, and bade fair to become a "crack shot."

"Why do you want to make a city gentleman and a good-for-nothing of him?" she said, impatiently. "You scold him for running about the country from morning until night. Will you like it any better to have him trapesing up and down the boulevards with a cigar between his teeth, or loafing in the cafés? You are making a mistake, children, but it is your own look-out. Charles is his guardian, and I have nothing to say. As for you, little one," she continued, "don't worry over it. This year will pass as others have before, and perhaps, if you are a good boy, they won't send you back again. But you will always be a real Vendéan, eh? Never deny your principles or blush for your country."

"Don't be afraid, aunt," I said, resolutely; "I will be a Vendéan to my dying day." Then I whispered in her ear: "You'll send me word how old Courteau gets on, won't you, and whether the partridge broods come out all right?"

"Yes, yes, my boy," she said, and hurried away to hide her tears, of which she was very much ashamed.

And now it was time to start. I went to say good-bye to Tom, who watched me disappear with sad longing in his eyes. Then I got into the little phaeton where Charles was already seated, and we were just about to go when Rose came running, all out of breath, with an enormous basket of provisions, which she pushed under the seat.

"You must make the little fellow eat something, Monsieur Charles," the poor woman said, with a break in her voice. "It's a great risk to be carrying a child of his age to such a far-away place. He hasn't enough shirts, either, I am certain. Do they wash their clothes at Yon (Lyons), Monsieur Charles? Is there plenty of water there?"

This unsophisticated query made me laugh in spite of my tears.

"Poor little fellow!" the old woman continued. "Will he ever come back?"

"Of course he will, Rose," said Charles. "I will bring him back myself in August, and you will see how much he will have grown."

"Poor child! What's he going to eat? August! You are only fooling me. I'll be dead and gone before he ever comes back!"

Then Cillette had to take leave of me, too. "Well! Good-bye to you, master," said the poor girl. "Try and have a good time. They say it's a fine place. Be sure and let us know how you get on."

Marguerite kissed me once more, and her tears fell on my forehead. Suddenly she turned to Charles and said: "Now go. Let us have it over. I cannot stand any more."

Charles gathered up the reins, and Fanfan darted forward like an arrow. We had Lexis with us; he was to take the horse and wagon back to Mesnil that evening.

We quickly covered the eighteen miles to Angers, and as I had somewhat regained my spirits, I did full justice to the breakfast which Charles had ordered at the "Lion d'Or." We reserved Rose's provisions for the long journey still before us. At last, at nine o'clock, after taking leave of Lexis, charging him with a thousand and one messages and saying good-bye to Fanfan, whom I kissed tenderly on the tip of his nose, we got into the express train for Paris. At six that evening we reached the capital. (The trains were not as fast then as they are now.) I had often longed to see that wonderful Paris, about which I had heard so much, but Charles rightly judged that the present would be an ill-chosen time in which to give me a treat, so we had our dinner in the restaurant at the railway terminal. Then we took a cab for the Lyons station.

The next morning at ten o'clock we were at our destination. Lucie was there to meet us, and gave me a most affectionate greeting. We got into the carriage which was drawn by two magnificent blooded horses. They had been champing their bits

and snorting with impatience at the entrance to the station, and the coachman had hardly been able to control them. They started off like the wind directly we were seated, and soon brought us to the Route des Étroits and the residence of Monsieur Robert, Charles' father-in-law. Lucie proudly showed me her two babies, Jeanne and Madeleine. Jeanne was three years old, Madeleine seven months; and the latter had that morning cut her first tooth. Think of the delight of papa and mamma! That day it happened that I had quite a bad toothache, and I said to Lucie, laughing, "You are very foolish to be so glad because she is getting teeth. Perhaps the poor little thing will be sorry she has them some day."

I must add that my two nieces said "How d'ye do" to their Uncle Paul in the sweetest way in the world, according to the opinion of their fond mother, and they made friends at once, and did not want to go away.

Lucie had arranged a pretty room for me, which overlooked a large and beautiful garden planted with noble trees. She had furnished the room with everything she could think of that was likely to please a boy of my age. While I was freshening up a bit after the journey, I heard her talking to Charles in the next room.

"And now I hope he will soon feel at home, poor child!" she said.

"My dear," responded Charles, "you are very

much mistaken if you imagine that by loading him with attentions and presents, as you are doing, you will correct his faults and make a man of him! That is not the way to set about it. The boy has got to suffer. In other words, he must eat humble pie. If you are going to spoil him like this, it would have been better to let him run wild in Anjou, where the air is more wholesome than it is here in Lyons. I had best put him in boarding-school at once."

"Oh, no! Don't do that. At least let him dine and sleep here. It is bad enough for a child who has been accustomed to run about as he pleased to be shut up within four walls all day long. He really must come home at seven."

"Very well," said Charles, "I am willing to try it; but if, by the first of January, he does not show some improvement, I tell you positively I will put him in boarding-school. I promised Marguerite. She understands these matters better than you do. If you are going to bring your own children up this way, I am very much afraid they will turn out to be selfish and worthless."

I knew very well at the bottom of my heart that Charles and Marguerite were right, but I had not the courage to fall in with their ideas, though I believed them to be wisest. I understood perfectly that there was one person on my side whose support I could count on, and I looked forward to getting a great deal out of my indulgent, kind-hearted, but far too yielding sister-in-law.

At luncheon I saw for the first time Monsieur Robert, who also welcomed me heartily, and offered to take me to see the Superior of the school I intended to enter.

The College Saint-Irénée, newly established under favor of the law of 1850 respecting freedom of instruction, was now in the fourth year of its existence. Opened in 1851 with fifty pupils, at the time of which I speak it had two hundred and fifty on the rolls. At first only very young boys were admitted, the most advanced being in the sixth grade, so that now the highest class in the school was only in the third grade. It was this class which I was to join.

Monsieur Robert, who was immensely wealthy, looked upon it as a duty to support Catholic enterprises, especially those in his own city, and it was he who had provided the funds necessary for the foundation of the new college.

Abbé Lefort, the Rector of Saint-Irénée, received Monsieur Robert as a friend and patron of the institution. I was entered at once for the class of the third grade, and it was decided that I should begin next day as a day-boarder. Monsieur Robert, like Charles, was of the opinion that I ought from the very start to have the benefit of boarding-school discipline, but he had, like his son-in-law, yielded to the persuasions of Lucie, who had successfully pleaded in my behalf. I was to take the omnibus in the morning at half-past seven, so as to be in time to

assist at Mass, which the pupils attended every day. I would take breakfast at Saint-Irénée with my schoolmates, and return after the evening study-hour, which was over at half-past six. Charles' orderly was to meet me at the door of the college and escort me home, thus anticipating any temptation to run about the streets.

The Rector treated me with fatherly kindness. He showed me over the building himself, and introduced me to my future professor, Abbé Duval, and to the prefects of studies and recreation, Messieurs Renard and Leroy. I was not at all displeased with my first impressions, for these gentlemen all seemed very agreeable, and acted as if they liked me already, but my heart sank within me when I realized that I must stay all day long in these class-rooms, or in the quadrangle, and that there was now no escape from study. There I must sit without moving for hours and hours on these lovely October mornings, when it is so good to be in the country; when the forests are arrayed anew in the varied splendors of autumn; the furrows, freshly opened by the plow, are covered with a silver network of cobwebs; the wine of Anjou already sparkles in the crimson clusters on the banks of the Loire; a violet mist, gilded by the rising sun, hangs over the meadows; the red partridge calls in clear notes to the echo; the first woodcocks stop by the gently flowing brook, and the wild ducks begin to utter their shrill cries above the pools and marshes.

It was all over. No more would I rock in my little boat while the swift, clear waters of the Gemme swept me on their rapid current down to the golden waves of the Loire. I would wander no more in the woods, drinking in the fine, pure air. From morning until night I must work at themes and translations, translations and themes. I must learn lessons without end, sit still for whole hours and listen to wearisome instructions. Then I counted on my fingers: Third Grade, Second Grade, Rhetoric, Philosophy! Four years it would take! Four years in prison! Ah, but it was hard! And there was no way out of it. Charles had made up his mind, and I knew that settled the matter, and thought myself fortunate to have escaped boarding-school. I resolved to make the best of things and to go to work seriously.

Unfortunately, my good resolutions soon vanished into thin air, and it must be confessed that circumstances were anything but favorable to them. Monsieur Robert entertained frequently at dinner and in the evening, and there was constant coming and going in the house. I nearly always went to bed very late, so I did not get up until a few minutes before the omnibus which took me to school was due, that is, I rose at about a quarter past seven, so I had no time to say my prayers, or look over my lessons. These continual distractions were not likely to foster the love of study in a boy of my disposition—ever on the look-out for diversion and fresh pleasures.

On Thursdays the outside pupils and day-boarders had a holiday, consequently, on that day I was absolute master of my time and my acts. Charles, who had just been made staff-officer by the general in command at Lyons, was nearly always absent on duty, and my sister-in-law had full charge of me, that is to say, I did just about as I pleased. Poor Lucie, who was not firm enough to refuse me the least thing, gave me money every week—a great deal of money, and so by degrees I acquired luxurious and foolish tastes. She indulged all my whims, even the most expensive, saying, at the same time, “Now, Paul, if you do not behave better than this I shall be in conscience bound to tell Charles, and he will put you in boarding-school.” I knew very well what her threats amounted to.

And then I was allowed to roam about the streets alone, when returning from the college and on Thursdays. Charles’ orderly was supposed to go with me, but I soon found means to get rid of him. A little money which I had saved, or some tobacco, was generally enough to make him relax his vigilance, and truth to tell, he was only too glad to go about his business and rejoin his comrades. I think parents make a great mistake in trusting the care of their children to a man-servant or a lady’s maid. These people, I know by experience, discharge this grave duty in a very careless manner for the most part. It is not surprising that they should, when we remember that parents themselves too often lack vigilance in this regard.

Left to myself, I made undesirable acquaintances, I read books and newspapers which never should have come within my reach; in short, I was on a most dangerous downward path, and it was only by a special grace of Divine Providence that I did not at that period of my life lose my faith.

At school, things did not go much better. Although most of my classmates were older than I, I was by far the tallest and strongest of them all, which gave me unquestioned superiority in their eyes. Boys are almost always incapable of appreciating intellectual capacity in a companion. They set much higher value on his height, his muscular development and his physical qualities in general. A strong, athletic boy, even if he be at the bottom of his class, has almost always considerable influence over the other students, and if his character is vicious, his companionship becomes a real danger to them. The danger is still greater, if to the physical advantage of such a boy be added unusual intelligence or, still worse, a quick, brilliant mind.

The day I began at Saint-Irénée the class was at work at a Latin translation. I had read Latin a great deal with Marguerite, and she had taught me to translate accurately, so it was mere child's play to me to understand and render into French the passage dictated by the professor. The next Monday I was put at the head of the class, and was praised by Abbé Duval and the Superior. I was very proud and pleased with myself, and instead of

my success being an incentive to further effort, I concluded that I could keep at the head of the class without exerting myself.

These circumstances combined to give me great ascendancy over my classmates, and, unhappily, I made very bad use of it. Still, I thank God that I did not set them a really vicious example, although I was the cause of much disorder and lack of discipline in the first division, which at that time composed the third and fourth grades. I played all sorts of jokes and tricks in the study-hall, the classroom and at recreation. These efforts at being funny, without being actually bad, were, for the most part, rather silly; but they inspired, nevertheless, much applause from the gallery, which served to increase my vanity. It is not generally appreciated what a desire, or rather passion, some children have for provoking others to laughter, for attracting the attention of their companions by some word, gesture, or attitude. I was fast becoming a serious detriment to Saint-Irénée.

I was several times lectured in a fatherly manner, and, as my delinquencies became more and more frequent, I was threatened with more vigorous measures. I only escaped expulsion a few weeks after I had entered the college by reason of the extreme leniency of the Rector and his reluctance to displease Monsieur Robert, the founder of the institution. I owe it to Abbé Lefort to add, however, that he was a very conscientious man, and if

he had thought my presence at Saint-Irénée to be a source of danger to the moral welfare of the children confided to his care, he would not have hesitated an instant to send me home to my guardians. God be praised, there was no such danger; but at the same time I was very troublesome, and it required the greatest patience on the part of the teachers to retain me in the school. Moreover, the professors and prefects were not the only ones who had complaints to make. Charges were also forthcoming from other quarters, for there was no end to the tricks I invented to torment the passers-by, the shopkeepers, and the servants.

It was a considerable walk from Saint-Irénée to Monsieur Robert's home, and as the supervision of the nurses and footmen amounted to little or nothing, my schoolmates and I were free to put into practice every mischievous notion that entered our brains.

One day we smeared the bell-pulls with grease or preserves, so that the cats and dogs of the neighborhood jumped and pulled at them with all their might to lick it off, and the result was a clanging of bells which set the footmen and housemaids wild with rage. Or perhaps some fine lady would come along, and soil her gloves in pulling the bell. Then she would break forth in loud exclamations of disgust, while we, hidden somewhere near by, would laugh immoderately at her discomfort.

One time we managed, with much trouble, to

obtain—I do not remember how—the address of all the hump-backs in the town. Then we had a circular printed inviting Monsieur, Madame, or Mademoiselle So-and-so, as the case might be, to come on a certain day (a Thursday, of course), at exactly three in the afternoon to the Place Bellecour, where they would receive an important communication. We addressed this letter to all the owners of humps of more or less prominence. Considering the natural curiosity of the human race, it was reasonable to expect that a good many people would respond to the invitation.

Nothing could be more ludicrous than the aspect of the Place Bellecour on the afternoon of Thursday, December 2d, in the year of grace 1854! Hump-backs approached along all the converging streets. The first arrivals began to walk up and down, awaiting the hour named. Soon watches were pulled out and consulted, then there were signs of impatience. At length they began to look at one another, question each other, exhibit their invitations and move about with ever increasing agitation, and when the swelling tide of humps of every sort, size, manner, and description gradually made manifest the practical joke of which they were the victims,—such a concert of exclamations and maledictions as arose! The poor creatures called out the police, who could only stand helpless, unable to control their laughter. No more could the public in general, who were amused and interested spectators of this truly re-

markable scene, hide their mirth. As for us, the rascally originators of the impromptu masquerade, we were by no means the least gay of the assemblage.

Another time we ordered a bath at every bath-house in town, with directions that they be taken to certain of our schoolmates whose particular virtue was not cleanliness. You can picture to yourself the result. All these "carriers of water," appearing from every direction with their clattering paraphernalia, and pushing up the stairways in spite of protests from the janitors; then the subsequent altercations with the servants, and the excitement of the people of the neighborhood, with all the attendant incidents, may be imagined.

Again—and this was a more ghastly joke—every coffin-maker and undertaker in Lyons received a notice of the death of a certain Monsieur X. (who was very much alive), of a certain street and number, with the request to repair at once to that address for the purpose of conferring with the family on the subject of the funeral arrangements. Imagine the result! But enough of these and similar pranks.

At Monsieur Robert's I was the despair of the cooks, to whose pots and pans I helped myself for the purpose of repeating the chemical experiments of Abbé Haron, our Professor. At that time the elements of chemistry were taught in the Third Grade. To this day I can see big, fat, Victoire, the famous head cook of the establishment, going to

Lucie with her bitter but perfectly justifiable complaints of my performances in her department. "And the worst part of it is, Madame," she concluded, solemnly, "that it is the Reverend Fathers that teach them these dirty tricks!"

She even went so far one day as to waylay Abbé Haron when he went to see Monsieur Robert. She reproached him in stinging terms for the bad habits he was instilling in his pupils. The poor priest, to whom this philippic was a complete surprise, was quite taken aback by the outburst.

Some time later my capers were the cause of a mortifying mistake on the part of the poor woman. I was in the habit of pulling the bell with all my might when I came home, with the intention of making a racket and teasing the maids. One afternoon about the time I usually arrived from school, a fearful clang resounded through the servants' quarters. "That's Monsieur Paul again, for sure!" cried the irritated cook, and she rushed out in a fury to the garden gate, which she flung open with an angry exclamation.

"I've caught you this time, you little villain!" said she, when what was her horror to find herself face to face with Cardinal de Bonald, Archbishop of Lyons and Primate of France, who had come in state to pay Monsieur Robert a visit. He was accompanied by his private secretary, and it was this good priest who had jerked the bell-pull with force enough to set the great bell of the cathedral in motion.

The unfortunate Victoire stood for an instant stupefied and speechless. When she came to her senses, she dropped down on her knees and exclaimed, "Forgive me, Your Eminence. It is Monsieur Paul's fault! Your Eminence rang so loud I was sure it was he."

The Cardinal laughed heartily at the incident, and straightway related it to Monsieur Robert, who proceeded to rehearse a number of my other pranks. They laughed, but I do not think they should have done so, for such mischievousness and idleness foreboded no good.

It was the custom at Saint-Irénée to prepare for the feast of Christmas by a three days' retreat. This year it was given by a Dominican, Father C. His instructions made a vivid impression on me. I went to see him several times, and God caused these interviews to be the means of rousing me to serious reflection. The good Father pointed out to me the danger I was in, and the pitfalls in my path. The misdemeanors I have described were not, it is true, very grave in themselves, but they diverted my attention from serious things, engendered a dislike for work, and were the occasions of a great many acts which were contrary to obedience, charity, and the respect due my superiors. I saw, too, that my idleness and frivolity were a pernicious example to my schoolmates, for which I would some day have to give account. Above all—and this was a great grace—I realized the danger I incurred from

promiscuous reading and by associating with certain acquaintances of doubtful character. As a consequence, I experienced real sorrow for my sins and a sincere desire to conquer myself, but I knew very well that, with my fickle and eager disposition, it would be very hard indeed for me to avoid committing the same sins again. The good priest encouraged me. He reminded me of the proverb, "God helps those who help themselves."

"If you were really generous in spirit," he added, "I would propose to you a means, a most excellent means, for your advance, but I am very much afraid you are too cowardly to adopt it."

I blushed up to my eyes. This reproach, to the truth of which conscience might have testified, seemed to me a grave injustice.

"You are French?" the priest went on.

"Yes, Father."

"And from what part of France?"

"From Vendée," I said, lifting my head proudly.

"Ah! From Vendée! Then you ought to be brave indeed. But you must remember that, more than all this, you are a Christian, that is, a follower of Jesus Christ, who loved you even to the death of the Cross. Can I count on you for a really generous effort?"

"Yes, Father."

"Very well, my child! Since you yourself realize that it is the absence of supervision and the complete freedom of action you enjoy, which are the

most fruitful causes of your wrong-doing (I had frankly laid bare the situation to him), take, as they say, heart of grace, and of your own accord ask your parents, I mean your brother and sister, who stand in their stead, to place you here as a boarder after the holidays."

I remained silent for several seconds. It was a great sacrifice I was asked to make. Only the day before, Lucie had come to me in triumph to announce that she had pleaded successfully and that I would not be sent to boarding-school until after Easter. "That means not at all," she added, with a significant smile.

"I do not like to promise, Father," I said to the priest. "I am afraid I might not keep my word."

"You are right not to say you will do it, my boy," said he, "unless you have the firm determination to be faithful to your agreement. Think it over this evening, and pray that you may decide aright, and then come and tell me what you will do."

I left the room and went to join my school-fellows who were at recreation. I dreaded the sacrifice demanded of me, and sought to avoid thinking of it, but the more I tried to put it out of my mind, the more persistently I was conscious of it. "You must—You ought—It is God's will."

In the chapel, in the study-hall, in the refectory, at my play, I was constantly assailed by that one thought to which I did not wish to yield, although I saw clearly that it was necessary.

At that time I had very little faith, and the great truths of religion made a profound and wholesome impression on my mind. All of a sudden I remembered what Marguerite had told me over and again, that the greatest difficulties can be overcome by prayer. I went into the chapel, and kneeling down before the Blessed Sacrament, I begged our Lord to give me fortitude and to help me to save my soul. Soon I became quite calm, and I saw clearly that with God's grace, I could do that which a short time before had seemed impossible. I went back to the Dominican Father, and promised that I would ask that same evening to be sent as a boarder to Saint-Irénée. He congratulated me upon my courage, and told me to thank God for it, and I left him with a light heart. I kept my word, and as soon as I entered the house I resolutely made known my determination. Charles was overjoyed, for he had been secretly reproaching himself for his lack of firmness, and Lucie said no more about it. The matter was settled, and the next day Abbé Lefort, in spite of some misgivings which were certainly justifiable, agreed to take me as a boarder after the Christmas holidays.

God rewarded the sacrifice I made, and from that time on I became a good student. My mental energy, no longer wasted on countless frivolities, could now be concentrated on serious occupations, and, as I had a very good memory and learned easily, I soon acquired such a taste for study that I was

surprised that I had never before realized its charm and its usefulness.

Thanks to Marguerite, I was prepared to make a good showing in the Third Grade, and I was soon among the foremost scholars. My kind teachers, delighted at this unlooked-for improvement, in every manner helped me to persevere in my undertaking. As for Marguerite, after all her anxiety and fears about my future, she was now happy beyond measure, and the letters she wrote me at that time (I was so careless as to lose them) reflected the joy with which her loving heart was filled. The testimony of a good conscience made me, too, experience quiet satisfaction and profound peace of mind. I was happy. It was a real conversion.

Ah! Why was I so mad as to wander once more, and so far, from the straight and narrow way which led to peace in this world and happiness in the next? But the time has not yet come to speak of that sad epoch of my life.

I love to look back on my school-days. As a rule, children do not appreciate these years, because they cannot take into account the trials that await them in later life. Of course, school is not without its trouble, sorrow, and weariness. Must we not serve our apprenticeship for the life before us? And what is life but a long warfare? Nevertheless, the insignificant suffering of childhood is not to be compared with that which we must face as we grow older, and our rest is broken with grave anxieties,

and we are weighed down with responsibilities, and have to bear the loss of our loved ones. But children can form no adequate idea of such things, and that is why the trials of youth seem to them so bitter.

I do not wish to give the impression by what I have just written that I consider, as a fixed rule, boarding-school better than day-school. That is not my opinion. I am thoroughly convinced that where the family is truly Christian, and the parents look upon the training of the mind and heart of the child as their paramount duty, it would be most unwise to withdraw the child from that home influence which is so completely in accord with the designs of Providence. The father and mother are, both in the spiritual order and in the natural order, the first instructors of the child. They have, as no one else can have, *the grace peculiar to their state in life*, which fits them to direct the unfolding of his intelligence and the formation of his character, since it is primarily to them that God has given the mission of guiding him in this temporal life and fitting him for eternity.

If the training received at home is conscientious, and the parents are *in every respect* equal to their task, the ideal plan is for the child to acquire the necessary instruction without leaving the home atmosphere. Let him attend during the day to the instruction of his teachers, and study under their supervision, so that he may gradually learn to work by himself; let his mental and moral faculties be

properly exercised, and let him acquire self-control by the daily intercourse in school and at play with his companions. But when evening comes, let him return to his home and to the influence exerted by the example of a Christian father and a Christian mother. Their lessons are the most efficacious of all, for they are indelibly graven upon his heart. Thus the teaching at school goes hand in hand with that of the home and supplements and develops it. This is the truth in theory; but in practice the contrary conclusion is generally reached.

If the training received from the parents be not solidly Christian, which is only too often the case, the mother only being pious and the father either actually opposed to religion or merely indifferent to it, the home atmosphere will not be wholesome for the child. If the head of the house takes the name of God in vain or ignores Him completely, grave scandal is most certainly the result, and though it is possible that a child might reach the age of twelve or thirteen without knowing that his father did not attend to his religious duties, still the time would surely come when the truth would burst upon him, and at that moment his faith would suffer a terrible blow.¹

¹ The bad example which blights a young heart is often the work of servants, whom parents take into their homes without due precautions. Then there is the danger of allowing children free access to the library where they may read books, magazines, newspapers and look upon pictures which, to say the least, do not always respect the innocence of childhood.

Many do not resist it. But what is to be said when the habits of the father tend to falsify the conscience of the child by the example of vice in the person of one whom he is bound to respect?

Even supposing that the family is all that it should be, and the whole household, masters and servants alike, live up to their faith, there still remains danger from without. There are to be considered the people who frequent the house, friends and relatives, and whether they are a source of danger by word or example. Then consider the streets and public places of the city in which you live. In our days, especially in the large centres, vice flaunts itself boldly—for it may do so with impunity—in the shop windows, on the walls, in the public parks, in the railway stations, in the form of books, magazines, newspapers and pictures in which neither virtue nor the faith are respected. In such surroundings a child carefully guarded at home runs the greatest risks when he goes out alone.

When faith and morals cannot be sufficiently safeguarded at home, it becomes a plain duty to send the child, if possible, to boarding-school. The parents should then choose a school which is uncompromisingly Christian, where children are taught their duty toward God, and where the discipline is in perfect accord with the divine law and the precepts of the Church.

“But,” it may be objected, “evil is to be found everywhere. Institutions conducted by priests or

religious are not exempt from it. Wherever a large number of children are gathered together, there are bound to be some who misbehave; so what is the use of taking such pains in the choice of a school? And then if the instruction is enlightened and serious, that is the main point. It is good for a child to have a knowledge of evil early in life, so that he can realize the horror of it and form the habit of resisting it. That is the best way to strengthen his character."

Let us argue that point. The intelligence and will of the child are undeveloped, otherwise his *education* would be complete, which is contrary to the hypothesis, since the very question at issue is how to conduct this education. Therefore, he has not yet come into possession of all his mental and moral faculties. Then, also, original sin must be taken into account, which has corrupted his nature and which inclines him to evil with all the more force in the time of youth, when the newly awakened passions seek their objects with an impetuosity only to be held in check by a wise and careful education and the assistance of divine grace. The young at this time pass through that awful crisis which those who have the care of souls know so well, and which demands the unremitting vigilance of the teacher. The child has the *right*¹ to be protected, to be de-

¹ This right, by a necessary correlation, involves a corresponding *duty* of *protection* on the part of those to whom Providence has confided the care of the child.

fended against himself during those years fraught with such peril, because as yet his faculties and powers are not complete, and the storm rages with greater fury.

A *supervision* which removes the occasions of grave sin, or, since it is impossible always to avoid the danger, provides that help which makes it possible to conquer it, and a *guidance* which rough-hews the man in the child by enlightening the intelligence and strengthening the will,—these are what are demanded of an educator.

This combination of qualities you will never find in the “non-sectarian” school, which undertakes to be neither for God nor against Him. And why? Because a system of morality which leaves out God has no foundation, and because it is impossible to instil sound principles by means of such a system.

It is just as serious an error to suppose that the non-sectarian school is not opposed to God. Did not Jesus Christ say, “He that is not with Me is against Me?” The end of the child, as of the man, is to reach heaven,—to save his soul, and you are never going to speak to him on the subject! You nullify, as a consequence, at the most fateful period of his life, this education which you have undertaken to give him, since you conceal from him the object for which he is in the world, the very reason for his existence here below.

Again, how can the master avoid at times com-

municating to the minds of his pupils his own ideas, convictions and desires? This he does instinctively without being conscious of it, otherwise he would not be really *master*. And this is why it is of the first importance to choose with care those to whom one confides the souls of one's children.

Without doubt evil does exist in Catholic schools, and even there the eyes and ears of children are assailed by scandal; but how different it is from that which takes place in Godless schools!

In the first place, in Catholic schools the moral standard is much less frequently and less seriously departed from. Vice does not flaunt itself openly, because it has not the freedom of the city; it is regarded as an enemy by the directors of the institution. What is more, the pupils have easy access to the Sacraments, which provide them with grace to resist temptation, or with the power, having fallen, to rise again. They can also at any time consult their spiritual father for consolation, advice, or encouragement. In such surroundings the average child is able to preserve his soul.

In the infidel or merely neutral schools, which are practically the same thing, breaches of good conduct, if condemned in theory, are often tolerated in practice, sometimes even encouraged (I could cite examples of this), provided that widespread scandal is avoided. Recourse to the Sacraments is attended with such difficulties that one can hardly count on it at all, and so also is the regular direction of the con-

fessor. A child of ordinary virtue in such surroundings will seldom, if ever, persevere.¹

“This is a long digression,” you may say. Perhaps not so far from the point as you imagine. I have seen so many sad things happen, so many young souls enslaved by vice because they had not been protected against it! I have heard so much senseless talk on this subject, and read so many “very successful” works which did not even touch upon the rudiments of the question!

Digression, if you will; I am willing it should be called so, if only it attains the object in view, if only it bears its fruit.

¹ True, it is possible for a soul to perfect itself in the midst of corrupt surroundings, but this result is seldom brought about, and is the effect of a special out-pouring of divine grace, which it were presumptuous indeed to count upon if, by our fault, we place our children in the midst of such grave dangers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SMILES OF YEARS GONE BY.

I HAVE kept the memory of Saint Irénée green, and though age has now flecked my hair and beard with white, I still find fresh within my heart the recollection of the persons and objects belonging to that happy time.

It is sweet to render this last tribute of affection and gratitude to the worthy preceptors who were so faithful in their efforts to bring us up in the way we should go and make us true Christians and true Frenchmen. They were as ready to sympathize in our enjoyments as in our labors, prompt to console us in our troubles and revive our failing courage. They were indeed *educators* in the full sense of the term. Most of them have already passed to their eternal reward. The survivors continue to edify us by their zeal and virtue.

It seems to me that I can still hear the earnest, vibrant voice of our rector, as, standing in the pulpit of the chapel, he enthralled us by the charm and unction of his eloquence. How many good Christians, fervent religious and holy priests were formed by his zeal and his doctrine, which were ever

clothed in harmonious and finished language! "Defunctus adhuc loquitur." Being dead he yet speaketh, for he lives again in his works, and younger generations will drink at this fruitful source of faith and love.

I had the same professor in the third and second grades and in rhetoric, Abbé Duval of holy and happy memory. What enthusiasm he inspired in his pupils for the subjects he taught! Greek, Latin poetry, history, music,—he was a man of universal attainments. There was such animation in his class, such life and spirit! He had our unwavering confidence. I can see him now, standing by his desk—this was his attitude when he grew particularly earnest—with his tall figure, luxuriant locks and large expressive gestures. We were so fascinated by his burning words that sometimes we did not even notice that the recreation bell had rung. There was a triumph indeed!

Like all enthusiastic, high-strung characters, he had his periods of depression and disillusion. One day he would praise us to the skies, and declare we were the finest class in all France and Navarre, and the next we "did not know enough to enter the sixth grade. Sixth! Why the eighth were certainly better students than we were!"

He was devoted to Cicero. By this I mean not only that he admired the thoughts and the style of the classic writer, but even his very person. One day some one read to Abbé Duval a description of an

impressive procession which had taken place in Rome on the feast of Corpus Christi in the midst of an immense concourse of people. "How delighted Cicero would have been," he exclaimed, "to witness such a triumph, if he had been a Christian, and had lived in our times!"

I must confess that the idea of associating Cicero with a modern Christian celebration always seemed very peculiar to me.

He had a profound knowledge and keen appreciation of antiquity, the flavor of which he was able to impart. He was noted for his continual and perfectly spontaneous allusions to mythology. They say that in his last illness (I can vouch for the truth of this), when his associates tried to persuade him to go to bed, he said, in all seriousness, "I can't, I can't. Go to bed! Why it would be as impossible for me as it was for Jason¹ to obtain the golden fleece!" In spite of the seriousness of the situation those present could not help laughing heartily.

I will never forget a rehearsal he once held with the choir, when he tried in vain to get the tenors to come in at the right time. The unfortunate fellows always began a half-beat too soon or too late.

"Why, it is very simple," exclaimed Abbé Duval, impatiently, "pay attention, now. I sing the solo in the 'Panis Angelicus.' Very well! At the words 'servus et humilis,' you come in. You understand, when I say *hu*, you must come in."

¹ Chief of the Argonauts' expedition, 1500 B. C.

"O, indeed!" cried the buffoon of the group. "We are not all horses and mules, to mind when you shout 'Hue!' "¹

The good Abbé was not the last to laugh at the pun!

And then in the class-room! It was a treat to see him join in our amusement when some one would make one of those school-boy blunders which cause a laugh worthy of Homer to burst from the other students

One day, when we were still in the third grade, one of my classmates was told to read his Latin composition. The subject was "The Ram."

"Translate the title," said Abbé Duval.

"Malé dé la brébisse," commenced the pupil.

"I don't understand you," said the professor.

"Malé dé la brébisse," repeated the boy with confidence.

"What are you trying to say?"

"Malé dé la brébisse," said the child for the third time, beginning to be a little uneasy.

"I do not understand a word."

"It is in the dictionary, sir!"

"Bring me your dictionary."

The dictionary was forthcoming, and the boy pointed to where the author after the word *ram*, had places in parentheses *mâle de la brebis* (male of the sheep), the French synonym. The poor boy had taken these words for Latin, and had thus writ-

¹An exclamation used in driving animals. (Translator's note.)

ten and read them. You may judge with what success.

Another time Abbé Duval slowly turned over a pile of exercises until he came to one for which he was searching. "Listen, gentlemen!" said he. "This is the translation which one of the class—I shall spare his blushes and refrain from mentioning his name—made of the Latin text we had yesterday afternoon. The phrase is worth its weight in gold."

After the lapse of fifty years, I still have the passage by heart, and I do not change a single word. This is the way it began:

"A certain man, sleeping away from home, balanced by a fall of fratricide, was in good part carried off during his slumber."

The pupil who made this version was, to be sure, not very bright; but he must have had a musical ear, for the phrase is quite rhythmic—in French.

What extract and what author the poor boy had thus distorted I do not remember, and I am sure it would be very difficult to trace the source with naught but this translation as a guide.

What nonsense we put into the mouths of the ancients in our childhood!

I remember that one of my classmates rendered these two words of Livy, "Incumbibat pariter," in this fashion: "He lay down with impartiality!"

The gem which follows was the production of a youth in the second class.

The opening sentence of Tacitus will be recalled: "Opus aggredior opimum casibus;" "I enter upon an epoch fertile in catastrophes."

One unfortunate boy thus translated the proposition: "I commence the work, rich with cheese!" The accusative *opimum* he had made to modify the subject of *aggredior*, and he had confused *casus* with *caseus*, accident with cheese!

The most remarkable feature of it is that even intelligent pupils will carelessly make these egregious mistakes.

We were very fond of Abbé Duval, and would have gone through fire and water for him, but this did not prevent us from occasionally making him the butt of some of our jokes.

One day one of the boys, sly wag that he was, purposely allowed himself to be relieved of a pretty little box of cigarettes, which had escaped the notice of the inspector of the college in spite of its label. During a lesson in Virgil, Abbé Duval, who had a weakness for cigarettes, confiscated the box, put it in his pocket, and after class went to the prefect of studies, and asked permission to divert to his own use the booty captured from the enemy. In the privacy of his own room he installed himself comfortably in his arm-chair, struck a match, and prepared to extract deftly a cigarette from the mother-of-pearl case which held them. He pulled, but nothing came. He pulled again, and yet again. Suddenly the box gave way, a spring flew up, and there, in place of the

coveted object, was a little, old man in harlequin costume, who saluted the disappointed smoker with a mocking gesture.

Abbé Duval laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks, but he was determined not to betray the fact that he had been duped; so in the class-room he made no allusion whatever to the subject. Unhappily for him, his mischievous pupil, who was determined to have his money's worth, accosted him the next day as he passed a group of boys at recreation.

"Monsieur l'abbé," he asked, "how did you like my cigarettes?" And as Abbé Duval feigned ignorance, the sly rascal went on, "O, I know. You were caught like the rest. I fooled papa in the holidays, too."

I am lingering over these reminiscences which are, perhaps, interesting only to myself, but I cannot close the chapter without some reference to Abbé Haron, our professor in physics and chemistry. He was a noble-hearted man, so devoted to his pupils that he wore himself out in their service. Moreover, he was a type.

I must give his account of how he obtained his bachelor's degree.

"Up to the age of twenty-three," he said to us candidly, "I was a carpenter. It was not until then that I decided to become a priest. I took the course in Greek and Latin rather hurriedly, as you may imagine, both because of my age, and because I spent so much time on physics and mathematics, of which

I was passionately fond. In consequence, when the time came for me to take the bachelor's examinations, I was by no means prepared for the one in literature, but the Bishop desired that we take them.

"So I had myself entered, and when the fateful day arrived, I presented myself in the hall, and soon set to work on my translation. There were many things which I did not remember, but there were two men near me who looked as if they were old hands at it, and so I glanced first to the right and then to the left, and when I saw anything which seemed reasonable, I put it down. And how do you think it turned out? Well, I passed, and they were both rejected!"

And the good man burst into his customary hearty laugh.

His fondness and admiration for the science of chemistry were unbounded, as the following incident will show.

He had just dictated a lesson on the subject. One of the class who had not studied hard enough, and who was afraid he would be punished, had managed to hide his note-book under his coat, and when the demonstration was over he asked permission to go out. It was granted, but as he crossed the court the professor followed him with a suspicious glance. In a few minutes the boy returned and sat down at his place. Abbé Haron fixed his eyes upon him, and marching straight up to him, pulled open his coat with a jerk, seized the *corpus delicti* and flung it into the middle of the room.

I well remember the scene. Huge Abbé Haron, red with anger, struggled to speak but could not utter a sound. At last, when his emotion had somewhat abated, he exclaimed, still trembling with rage, "It is unpardonable, unworthy, infamous, inconceivable, it is——" another word with the negative prefix did not present itself. At last, after a long pause, he concluded in a solemn and majestic tone, "You are not worthy to study chemistry!"

Was not that an effective climax?

As the result of my first year at school I received at the closing exercises six first and six second prizes. I was warmly congratulated by the rector and all my teachers. This was some compensation for the delinquencies of my first term. Early next morning Charles and I took the train for Paris, and that night at eleven o'clock Charles saw me off for Angers. He was obliged to return at once to Lyons.

I was as happy as I could be. I was on my way to my dear Guitte, my elder sister, whom I loved as a mother, to Aunt Dumoulin, Mesnil, the Hutterie, old Rose, Cillette and Lexis, Tom and Fanfan, and all the familiar objects which absence had but served to render more dear. What excess of joy! And then Lucie, as a reward for my diligence at school, had given me that same morning a fine double-barelled Lefauchaux, which was the fashion in hunting pieces at that period, and a superb two-year old setter, thoroughly trained. She was to be called

Diana. That was already decided. The gun reposed in the rack of the railway carriage, and every minute or two I looked up to see if it were safe. Likewise at every stop I leaned out of the door to see that the guards did not hand my dog over to a stranger.

In my pocket was a letter to Marguerite from Abbé Lefort. I learned afterwards that in it he confided to her the result of his observations of my character. The substance of it was this: "He is a hard student, sincerely pious, but has strong passions and an intense nature. He will probably go to extremes either of good or of evil."

CHAPTER XII.

BROKEN HEARTS.

FIVE o'clock in the morning! "Angers! Ten minutes' stop!" shouted the guard, opening the doors of the carriages.

"Ten minutes' stop! What are you talking about?" I thought to myself with delight. "Two months and four days' stop, you mean! School does not open until the fifth of October."

In an instant I had eagerly scanned the faces of the people standing on the platform. There was Marguerite waiting for me. I jumped out of the carriage, ran to her, and threw my arms around her neck. It was ten months since I had seen her, and we had never been separated before.

"Come," said Marguerite, after a moment. "They are all in a hurry to see you at home. I came over yesterday morning. Our wagon is here. The expressman will bring your trunk later. We could not take it in the phaeton anyway. Let's go!"

I followed her out of the station, my gun on my back, carrying my valise in one hand and pulling Diana along with the other. She was still bewildered by her long imprisonment in the baggage car.

The little wagon with Fanfan was standing outside. The intelligent animal knew me, and pushed up, harnessed as he was, to be petted.

In less than no time I had settled my dog on some straw in the bottom of the wagon, and jumped up to the seat where Marguerite had already taken her place. She had taken the left hand side so as to let me drive, just as she used to do when she was rewarding me for good behavior.

How good it was to be together once more, we two, little brother and big sister!

"Are you ready, Marguerite?"

"Yes. Drive on!"

"Get up, Fanfan!"

And off we flew like the wind. It seemed as if Fanfan was in haste to carry his young master back to his own country. Woods, fields, and meadows passed by as fast as lightning. I think we must have reached Mesnil in an hour and a quarter.

Meantime Marguerite inspected me with satisfaction. She found me taller, broader and more sturdy, but what rejoiced her heart most was that she saw I was simple-minded and gay as of old.

"This is my same Paul," she said, "with his baby laugh and his big eyes, which look you square in the face."

I was very proud because I was now taller than she.

"You will have a cavalier, now," I said, laughing. "Whenever you like we can go out to parties."

But here we are at Saint-Laurent. Marguerite wanted to stop a few moments to show me to our old pastor, who was delighted to see his altar-boy once more. I was glad to go into the church for a minute. There was so much to thank God for! Then we got in again, and swept on, and in a few minutes we were home.

Hurrah! Here we are! The avenue, the meadows, the Gemme and Mesnil!

At last we are home! I jumped down, gave my hand to Marguerite, and then threw my arms around Aunt Dumoulin, who had insisted on waiting until I came before setting about her daily occupations.

"How d'ye do, Aunt; Rose; Cillette. Well, Lexis! How d'ye do, Tom? How d'ye do, everybody! Here I am at last and for two whole months."

When I had been kissed, examined and measured to see how much I had grown, I was led into the dining-room, where breakfast was waiting—and such a breakfast! I would be eating still if I had been obliged to do justice to all the viands. And then I resumed once more my free out-door life, which soon brought back to my cheeks the color temporarily banished by the hot weather in Lyons and the long railway journey.

Excursions of all sorts, on foot and in the carriage, sometimes with Marguerite and sometimes without, hunting and fishing expeditions even with old Courteau, whom I was allowed to see now that I was good once more,—all these and many other

pleasures combined to make a glorious vacation, of which, however, there is little to tell except that it passed with whirling rapidity.

I should mention an event which took place early in September, and which was of the gravest importance to Marguerite and to me. On that occasion my sister gave me a proof of the truly heroic efforts of which her devotion to me was capable.

It is to this sacrifice of hers, I am convinced, that I owe the very special grace which was one day to enable me to seek again the narrow path, and work out my salvation, if God, in His great mercy so willed it.

For some time past many offers of marriage had been received at Mesnil. Although my sister's fortune was small—insignificant indeed—her rare and solid virtues, unusual mental attainments, amiable disposition and the delicate charm of her appearance and of her manner made her most attractive, and many a mother ardently desired that her son might win her as his life's companion. Marguerite had always refused to entertain any of these propositions, and had responded that she was not thinking of marriage. At the time of which I speak she was nearly twenty-four, which led people to suppose that she would remain single, "wait on St. Catherine," as we put it.

The morning of the first of September—I well remember the date—I was up in my room at about half-past seven, getting ready to go out hunting,

when I heard carriage wheels on the gravel of the avenue. I looked out the window to see who could be coming at such an early hour, and to my amazement a coach, decorated with a coat-of-arms and drawn by two superb thoroughbreds, drew up before the door. Madame de Saint-Julien got out, and went at once to Marguerite's room. The latter had just returned from Saint-Laurent, where she had been to Mass. As the countess often came to see my sister, I thought no more of it except to wonder at her choosing such an early hour, and whistling to Diana I started off to play havoc among the partridges.

When I returned just before noon, I saw the carriage going down the avenue of chestnuts and turning off toward Aulnaie.

"That is strange!" I said to myself. "The Comtesse de Saint-Julien was here nearly five hours! There must be something up, evidently."

Going up to my room, I met Marguerite coming out of hers. Her eyes were red, and she seemed much distressed.

"What is the matter?" I said. "What is troubling you?"

Her only answer was to clasp me in her arms and kiss me, at the same time bursting into tears. I was very much mystified and alarmed, but I dared not ask any more questions. Besides, the luncheon bell had rung, and my aunt was waiting for us.

Marguerite ate very little, and I noticed she had

great trouble in controlling herself. As soon as the meal was over she went to her room and locked the door. I went up a few minutes later to ask if she were sick and if she wanted anything. Without opening the door she answered that she was well, but she wanted to be alone for a while. "Try and get a rabbit for me," she said. I could see that she wanted me out of the way.

"All right," I answered, "I'll go out," and I made ready to start off again. It was still so very hot, however, that I made up my mind to wait until later, and meantime I set to work to prepare some cartridges.

At three o'clock, just as I was about to start, what was my amazement to see the countess' carriage drive up the avenue at a round pace! Madame de Saint-Julien got out, and to my surprise she was followed by the pastor of Saint-Laurent. They asked for Marguerite, and Rose went in all haste to inform her. Soon I heard my sister open her door, and go down to receive her visitors. Much puzzled, I ran down to Rose in the kitchen.

"Do you know," I asked, "what all this means?"

"It means that we will have a fine wedding here before long, Monsieur Paul," said the good woman, clapping her old, wrinkled hands joyfully. "You will be coming back from Lyons with Monsieur Charles and his sweet little lady to see it! You'd better be waxing your pumps, Monsieur Paul, for there'll soon be dancing. Mamselle has always said

'No' until now, but I am thinking that now she will say a big 'Yes,' or I am much mistaken."

"I suppose the old woman is right," I said to myself. "The countess loves Marguerite as if she were her own daughter, and she wants her to marry her son."

I think I have said that Monsieur René, who was about Charles' age, was the only child of the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Julien. He was a lieutenant in the cuirassiers stationed at Nantes, and had just taken a month's leave of absence, which he was spending with his parents at Aulnaie.

At this juncture I was strongly tempted by curiosity. I wanted very much to know what was going on. I knew well that what I was about to do was not right, and I did not decide upon it all at once, but slowly crept upstairs toward my own room, which it will be remembered, opened into Marguerite's. The door had been left open a little, and I could hear all that transpired without letting my presence be known. I was supposed to be out hunting, and they did not scruple to speak out loud. I still hesitated, but at last curiosity got the better of me, and I went into my room on tip-toe.

Madame de Saint-Julien was speaking. There was no more doubt about it; she was urging my sister to accept Monsieur René's hand in marriage.

"You may rest assured, my little Marguerite," she was saying, "that you will be happy with us. Monsieur de Saint-Julien is truly attached to you, and

sincerely admires you, and as for me, you know I could not love you more if you were my own child. Of that I have given you many proofs. Do not allow your delicacy to be offended by the thought that some people would call this a *mésalliance* for René. It is true that we have a considerable fortune, and you have nothing, or almost nothing. Our position in society is higher than yours, if you will. But your fine qualities (let me speak freely this once, dear child, even if I do hurt your modesty), your fine character, all the lovable traits of your nature and that certain something about you which makes everyone love you, and the great happiness you will bring to all three of us in becoming one of the family,—all this much more than makes good any fancied discrepancy, and it will be you who are conferring the favor. If you were only to see my poor René. He has been miserable for eighteen months,—ever since you refused him the first time. He rarely speaks to me on the subject, for he is exquisitely reserved by nature, and shrinks from displaying his feelings, but I can see that he feels the dashing of his hopes more than I can tell, and I fear the consequences of a second refusal. Here, dear Marguerite, let me read you the letter my poor boy has written to you. He has made me his messenger and his advocate, and I know that he did himself great violence when he wrote these lines. He is pushed to the last extremity.”

And the countess began to read Monsieur René's letter.

I do not know what became of this letter, and I no longer remember the exact terms in which it was couched, but I give the general sense of it.

The poor young man besought my sister to believe in the depth and sincerity of his affection. "My wealth is nothing," he wrote, "and I am the one who will be under everlasting obligations if you will give me your heart. Do not be afraid that I will try to change the purpose and manner of your life. I know that you live for God and the poor, and I will scrupulously respect the occupations to which you devote your time, leaving you full freedom to go wherever your charity directs your steps and only asking that I may sometimes be your companion, and learn from you how to help the unfortunate. Excuse the awkward manner in which I express myself, Mademoiselle," he added, "I could face my squadron with far less timidity. If you dread society," he said, further, "you are alarmed without cause. I will be only too glad to break with any associations which would not be in accord with the manner of life you elect."

Then Monsieur René spoke of me: "I fear very much that your brother is the chief obstacle to my happiness. You have devoted your life to the child, and I am told that you believe that it would be breaking the vow you made at your mother's death-bed, were you to allow any other interest to interfere with your care for him. Be reassured on this point. I am confident I can relieve your anxiety. I swear

to you before God to look upon Paul as my oldest son, and to make him joint heir to my fortune with the children it may please Providence to send us. I hope this explanation will satisfy you in every respect, and that the Good Lord will inspire you not to break my heart by a second refusal. If, however, you are not to be moved, I shall not put an end to myself. I know my duty as a Christian. But my life will be a blank, and I shall not know where to turn. In a short time I shall receive my captaincy, and be transferred to another regiment. I shall then ask to be sent to the Crimea on the next transport. Happy for me if God permits a Russian shell or bullet to put an end to my misery, so that by dying in the service of my country I may end a life which without you to me is unbearable."

I heard Marguerite sobbing. Then she said, "I cannot! I cannot! O, how you are making me suffer!"

"Why, my dear Marguerite," said Abbé Aubry, urging her in his turn, "you exaggerate your obligations. I know very well it is the delicacy of your conscience which prevents you from accepting so suitable an offer. Believe me, my child, you have fulfilled your duty to Paul a hundred times over; and moreover, from the time that Monsieur René adopts him as his son he does not cease to be your child. He acquires another guardian, or rather, a father. What more could you wish!

"And then, think well, my daughter, you will be-

come a person of power and influence. Ten or twelve millions is the amount at which the fortune of the Comte de Saint-Julien is estimated. I do not speak thus to tempt you with the attractions of money. That would indeed be most unworthy of a priest. But, consider, you who do so much even with your limited means, what would you be able to accomplish with this immense fortune at your disposal? The more so that your husband and his parents could have no greater happiness than that of making all your benevolent ideas a reality and dispensing charity through your hands. No, my child; no, Marguerite! you have not the right to refuse!"

Marguerite was still silent.

"My child, my dear, dear daughter," cried the countess, "take pity on us! Surely you are not going to drive my son away from me! You see what he says. Unless you accept him, he will leave for the Crimea!"

At last my sister spoke. Her voice was altered and trembling, and now and then she was interrupted by her tears.

"Oh," she said, with great effort. "You do not understand. You have never understood. God alone knows what I am undergoing! I know that duty does not demand this of me, but sometimes one must go farther than mere duty. What the future of my brother will be I do not know, but I fear it will be full of dangers for a soul whose passions are so intense that they will certainly lead him into constant

temptations. Perhaps, in order that he may have the grace necessary to save his soul another must always be ready to suffer and even, if necessary, to die for him. The day my parents died, and I was left to take the place of a mother to the child, I offered up my life and all my happiness in this world, if that should be in God's eyes the price of Paul's eternal salvation. But were I to become a wife and mother, my heart would be divided, for I know I should love my husband and my children with all my strength. Paul would no longer hold the first place in my affections, and if his soul were in danger I would no longer,—it would no longer be right for me to die for him, because I would be bound by other and more sacred ties."

"What a treasure we are losing!" exclaimed the countess. "O my boy, my poor René!"

"We must submit," said Abbé Aubry.

At this point I could restrain myself no longer, and suddenly opening the door, I ran to Marguerite and threw my arms around her. "All this for me," I cried, "never, never! I would be the most ungrateful brother in the world if I let you make such a sacrifice. Do, dear Guitte, say, 'Yes,' and make us all happy. I ask you in father's and mother's name. They look down on us now from heaven, and they know you have truly kept your promise. Do not be afraid for me. I swear to you I will always be a faithful Christian, and you will never have to worry about my soul. *Now* you will say, 'Yes'; won't you?"

I can say with perfect truth that the idea of being heir to millions played no part with me. I knew no more about three per cents than a Huron. To live in the country and to have a dog and a gun and plenty of ammunition was to me the height of bliss; so my interference was entirely disinterested.

So there were the Abbé Aubry, Madame de Saint-Julien and I all pleading. The poor countess made one last attempt. "My daughter," she said, "take pity on my son René!"

Marguerite shuddered as if cut to the heart. "Speak to me no more of René!" she exclaimed. "Don't you see that I love him and that my heart struggles for him against itself with unspeakable violence? Could you not see that when I stayed away from Aulnaie and deprived myself as often as I could of your kindness, it was in order to protect myself against the attachment which I saw was beginning and which would be in the way of my accomplishing my task? But how could I guard against the great qualities and noble character of Monsieur René which attracted me and aroused my sympathy in spite of myself? And because of all this two hearts are broken for always." Then, drawing me to her and clasping me to her heart, she said, "Here is my son! I will never have any other!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OLD PEOPLE PASS AWAY.

THIS morning, December 31st, 1900, the dawn of the new century, I was thinking sadly, as I sat by the fireside, of all the relatives and friends who are gone. The list is a long one. How many have departed this life since I entered upon it! First of all, my father and mother stricken by the blow which made me an orphan at the age of six; then my Aunt Dumoulin, our good doctor, old Rose, Courteau, the Ducoudrays,—and my dear Marguerite. Ah! that loss was the most bitter of all my life. I have not yet recovered from it. Later Charles and Lucie passed away soon after a dreadful misfortune, and left me their nine orphans. This is the family that the Good Lord gave me, and the only one I ever had. Then soon I was to see Jeanne die—brave, sweet child!—gone to heaven with a smile on her lips; and next Hippolyte, who fell at Loigny when only sixteen, with the badge of the Sacred Heart upon his breast, like his ancestors of '93, and then so many dear and faithful friends, good Abbé Haron, Abbé Lefort, Abbé Duval, our beloved masters. “The dead pass quickly.” My turn will come soon!

In the month of June, 1856, while I was finishing my second year at Saint-Irénée, I heard of my aunt's death. She had just completed her eighty-first year. A soldier to the last, she did not take to her bed until the two last days, and she died perfectly conscious and full of faith and Christian fortitude, but without losing, even at the very end, that somewhat rough originality which was her most marked characteristic.

I was reading again this morning the letter in which Marguerite told me of her death. I subjoin some extracts.

MESNIL, Wednesday, June 25, 1856.

My Dear Child: This letter will bring you very sad news. God has just taken to Himself our dear aunt after only two days' illness. She was very tired on Monday after the hay harvest at Dervallière. On her return to Mesnil, she had a sudden chill followed by very high fever. With much difficulty I persuaded her to go to bed. As her condition seemed to me serious, I sent for her old friend the doctor, who came at once, and found that she had inflammation of the lungs.

We took heroic means to check the progress of the disease, but in spite of all we could do, Aunt Dumoulin failed rapidly. God had decreed that this should be the end of her earthly pilgrimage. This morning the dear soul was nearly gone. She was conscious up to the end, and was able to speak. She knew she was dying, and she prepared herself calmly and in that whimsical way of hers which you know so well. Yesterday she sent for the pastor, and he gave her the last Sacraments. Abbé Aubry was very much moved. When he asked her if anything troubled her, she said, "No, I am quite easy. I know I am not worth a farthing, but I trust in God's infinite mercy."

"You forgive from the bottom of your heart all who have ever injured you?"

"Yes, from the bottom of my heart; even the Blues who killed my father and brother. I wish them a place in heaven. But," she added, and a smile passed over her face, "I don't think I will walk over that way very often."

In the morning she made me read her will, which leaves all her property to you and me.¹ This includes Mesnil and some investments of small value. She lays down in your case this strange condition: that you send to the Comte de Chambord every winter a basket of game, as she herself has done, you know, for many years.

By the way, I must confess that I did not feel myself in honor bound to execute this condition, and I am confident that the Count has borne me no ill will in consequence. I had some masses said every year about Michaelmas for the intention of the King, a practice which I continued up to the time of the Prince's death, and I am sure that by this means I complied in a more effective manner with the last will of my worthy Aunt Dumoulin.

But I must go on with Marguerite's letter.

This, Wednesday, morning (she continued) she asked me to send for the doctor. "I know very well there is nothing he can do," she said, with a smile; "that is not what I want him for." I sent Lexis at once to ask Doctor Durand to come over to Mesnil. He came immediately. When he came into the room my aunt said, "Ah, François, will you soon be thinking of preparing for death, too? You have not much more time, by poor old friend. A few more turns of the wheel and your cart is in the ditch; and if you end like a heathen, as you have lived, you may be quite

¹ Charles had urged my aunt to make Marguerite and me her sole heirs.

sure you will burn in the very bottom of hell. For there is a hell, François; there is a hell as sure as I am going to die in a few hours. Think of your soul, and don't send it to broil in hell for all eternity, while the rest of us are happy with the good Lord. Your father and mother were not idiots, were they? And all the priests and bishops, and our Holy Father, the Pope, and the Doctors of the Church, and the Saints, have more brains than you and I. Very well, then. Submit to the teachings of the Church. Listen to the advice of a dying woman, who loves you very much, though she has said many foolish things to you in her life. Some of them you deserved, too!"

Poor Doctor Durand was very much moved. He fell on his knees by my aunt's bed to pray. The tears ran down his face, and he sobbed aloud. "Catherine," he said, at last, "Catherine, will you pray for me?"

"Well, of course I will, you old rascal! This is not what you lack! Go away, now, and leave me with my little Marguerite. She is going to say the prayers for the dying."

The doctor went out of the room, and as I followed him he said to me, much softened, "My child, I am afraid you will have to teach me the catechism again."

This made me so happy, for I had been very much afraid that this dear old friend would slip away from us!

I went back then to Aunt Dumoulin, and said the prayers for the recommendation of the soul. She was evidently sinking. I think that for a half hour she was unconscious. Suddenly she came to herself and tried to raise herself up, and looking at the picture of the Sacred Heart which I had placed near her bed, she exclaimed in a strong voice, "For Religion and for the King!" It was the battle-cry of Vendée. A few seconds more and she had gone.

I have prepared her body for the grave with the help of old Rose, who weeps as if her heart would break. Just think! For fifty-five years they were together, and were quarreling from morning until night, but they were at the same time devoted to one another. The funeral will be on

Friday, day after to-morrow. Don't fail to go to Holy Communion for your aunt, and pray for Doctor Durand's conversion.

Some days later I received a second letter.

MESNIL, July 8, 1856.

My Dear Paul:—To-day I have good news to tell. I think our dear aunt must have been praying a great deal for her old friend. However that may be, the day after the funeral, that is, a week ago Saturday, Doctor Durand came over to see me. "My dear," said he, simply, "I want to return to God, after forgetting Him for so long, but I do not even know my prayers. I am more ignorant than the children in the catechism class. I have come to ask you to take charge of my soul." I was beside myself with joy. Then and there he learned his first lesson, and since then I have been over to see him every morning. He is as trustful and tractable as a child, and it is a delight to see what good dispositions he has. Prayer is indeed all powerful! Remember this truth all your life long, dear Paul! Some day you will need to apply it. There is every reason to hope that our dear friend is now prepared to meet his God. This afternoon he made his general confession, and received absolution, and to-morrow morning we are to receive Holy Communion together at Abbé Aubry's Mass at seven o'clock. Just think of it, the poor soul has not been to the Sacraments, so he says, since 1792, that is, for sixty-four years! You must help us to thank Almighty God for his reconciliation.

For several days I have been teaching the doctor how to make his morning meditation, and it is really wonderful to see what facility he has for the exercise. And he is so utterly unconscious of his aptitude in the matter! Not long ago I found him very much depressed. "My dear," said he, "I never shall be able to pray in the right way. You know you told me to meditate on death. I did my best to keep my mind on it, but there! Hardly had I made the sign of the cross when I saw again at a glance all the sins of my life, so many and so great, and then I

thought how this evening the Good Lord would wipe them all away, and make my soul as white as snow, and I began to weep and weep, and forget all about my meditation. 'Pshaw!' I said to myself, 'What was it Marguerite told me?' Then I began over again, but it was no use. In half a minute I was thinking of Our Lord on the Cross, and the thought that He had died like that for me made me forget everything you said. You see how it is. I always have distractions." I told him he was very fortunate to have that sort of distractions, that most people did not have that kind, and that many whom I knew would be very glad if they could pray as he did.

I cannot find the last part of this letter in which Marguerite describes the childlike joy with which the old man received the Holy Communion.

He was wise indeed to lose no time in regulating his spiritual affairs. A few days later he had a stroke of apoplexy, which carried him off in half an hour.

Not long after Aunt Dumoulin's death Marguerite decided to move back to the dear Hutterie, round which were twined so many tender memories; so we established ourselves there once more soon after my vacation began, in August, 1856. We were very glad to be back again. Everything reminded us of our parents and our childhood days, and then the situation was so pleasant, the view so cheerful, and the landscape so fair! How sweet it was to fall asleep listening to the murmur of the Gemme, which danced through our meadows, and seemed constantly to turn back upon its pathway as if for one more glance at the Hutterie before leaving it behind forever.

From our new abode it was as easy as from Mesnil to reach Saint-Laurent, Angers, or even Saint-Florent, if we crossed the Loire. One great advantage was that the house was so much larger and more conveniently arranged than Mesnil that we could easily accommodate Charles, Lucie and their four children with the nurses; so they came and spent the last part of September with us, and I returned with them to Lyons, where I commenced my year of Rhetoric.

Marguerite was left alone at the Hutterie with the household of Mesnil, who never would have been willing to leave her. In fact, there was never any thought of it. She might have been dull, if she had not had so many things to do, but as it was there was no time for it. God and her neighbor took up all her days.

During the course of this school year God called to Himself, one by one, many of our faithful friends. The first to go was old Rose, who died a few months after my aunt, assisted in her agony by her devoted young mistress, whom she loved so dearly. A little later it was old Courteau, who had a happy death, and whom Marguerite prepared for his end. The two Ducoudrays, faithful Christians all their lives, "passed by the way the others passed," to use the melancholy expression of old Comines.¹

¹ "Il (Louis XI) eut beau faire venir Saint François de Paule du fond de la Calabre pour qu'il lui rallongeât la vie, il fallait qu'il passât par où les autres sont passés.

Death seemed to respect our good pastor alone. His failing strength, however, made it impossible for him to take charge of the parish of Saint-Laurent any longer, and he humbly gave place to his successor, and retired to a little house near the church, where he continued for several years more his life of prayer and good works. He died at the age of ninety-five, preserving his mental powers to the end.

With this exception, the old people passed steadily away; and if I be permitted to pay a last tribute to more humble beings—I mean the faithful animals, friends, and servants of our youthful years—I will mention that old Tom came to his end, at the age of fourteen or fifteen years, one winter night when they forgot to shut his kennel.

As for the little horse, he kept his strength and spirit for some time longer; but in the summer of 1858 he began to show signs of wear, and lost his speed and vigor. Marguerite had to get another mount, and only used the faithful Fanfan for easy distances in the neighborhood, more to exercise him than to get any real service out of him.

The miller of Saint-Laurent came one day and offered us a hundred francs for him. He said the beast was of no further use to us, and he himself could make him work to the very last. We indignantly refused his proposition, and to the end of his days Fanfan drew his pension in the shape of fresh water, a full manger, and a warm stable, to

say nothing of many pettings. He died a few months after his friend, the Newfoundland.

I now come to speak of the most crucial period of my life, a time which has left behind it everlasting remorse, though I firmly hope that God has pardoned me, and established me once more in His grace. Then I still have to tell of the last years of my dear sister, of how I was left at the age of twenty-six with nine orphans to rear, and how God helped me to accomplish my task.

PART IV.

THE RANSOM OF A SOUL.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW A BATTLE IS LOST.

AT THE close of the school year 1858-59, I completed my course at Saint Irénée, where I had been for five years. I had taken my two degrees, Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Sciences, and as I had barely entered my eighteenth year, it would have been easy for me to gain admission to the government schools. Charles, who had just been promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in recognition of his gallant services on the battlefield of Magenta, would have liked to have me enter the army. This career had, indeed, been marked out for me by several of my family, first of all by my father. I admired and do still admire our army, which is necessary for the defense of the country and of society, and I have always,—thank God!—been ready to take arms and join the ranks of our soldiers when the honor or independence of our fair land was menaced. Yes, I fervently love and admire our gallant army, and I share the indignation of all loyal Frenchmen at the monstrous conspiracy, hatched by Freemasonry and kept alive by foreign gold, whose object was the

destruction of our military institutions. But, if in those days as now I loved the army, garrison life, the life of the soldier in time of peace, had no attractions for me.

Marguerite would have liked to have me at home, supervising the cultivation of our land and managing our little patrimony, which, with some trifling exceptions, consisted of Mesnil and the Hutterie, about two hundred and twenty acres in all.

That would have been all very well as long as there were only we two, but when I should attain to manhood and have a family of my own to support, how was I to keep up an establishment and suitably educate my children—especially if they should be numerous—with such limited resources? I was urged by necessity to strike out for myself, and to do this I must leave Anjou, at least for a time.

Marguerite realized the force of these arguments, but she was very apprehensive concerning the welfare of my soul when she thought of my having to live alone so far away from her and so young to be left to my own devices; nevertheless, she resigned herself to the separation as inevitable, and made no attempt to alter my decision. So it was agreed that on All Saints' Day that same year, 1859, I should take up my abode in Paris and commence my law studies. I had not as yet any precise idea as to what I should do later on, but a knowledge of the law was useful in many occupations, and I considered it wise to prepare myself by this preliminary

study, since it might assist me to more than one opening. To tell the truth I was ambitious,—who is not at seventeen?—and I had thoughts of entering public life and making a name for myself. In imagination I already saw myself mount the rostrum, always, be it understood, to champion the cause of right and justice, and take an active part in the direction of public affairs.

My sister busied herself during the last days of vacation, in preparing my student's outfit. She insisted on going with me to Paris so that she might introduce me to certain families of note, whose acquaintance would be most desirable for me, and who had been interested in my behalf by common friends. She was particularly glad of the opportunity of taking me to see the Abbé Hermant, the well-known apostle of youth.

The servant of God was at that time nearing the end of his holy and useful life, but he still employed his remaining strength in the service of souls. He promised to have me come and see him and to take special interest in my welfare. This was a great relief to Marguerite, and made her more reconciled to our separation.

Charles wished to share with her my expenses, and it was agreed that each of them should send me eighty francs a month. This modest allowance of a hundred and sixty francs was ample for the necessities, and even some of the comforts of life, but it was too limited to admit of my indulging in any

extravagance or maintaining any relations incompatible with a studious and regular life.

It was very wise to give me only a small amount of money at a time. This precaution saves a young man from many dangers.

The summer which preceded my departure was a very lively one for us. Charles and Lucie spent September at the Hutterie with their six children. There were Jeanne, who was now a big girl eight years old, Madeleine, just six, the two boys Hippolyte and Charles, five and four years old, and, lastly, Clare and Louise, the little twins who had spun out but twenty-six months of their lives.

As I have said before, my sister-in-law was a most loving wife and tender mother, but her good nature too often made her over-indulgent, and because of this serious short-coming she was unfit to bring up her children properly. Being truly humble she felt this herself, and saw clearly in what respect she was lacking, and so she had some time before asked Charles to confide the governing of the children to firmer hands than hers. He had willingly agreed, for he feared that much harm would result from his wife's habit of yielding.

Providentially they succeeded in finding the right person.

Abbé Lefort, whom my brother consulted on the subject, recommended a young woman twenty-five, very intelligent and refined, with good common sense and great firmness of character. Mademoiselle

Dupont had been forced by recent reverses to work for the support of herself and her mother. She seemed made to supply what Lucie lacked. She was engaged upon Abbé Lefort's recommendation, and entered upon her duties in my brother's family just at the time when they were starting for Anjou, so she spent the vacation with us at the Hutterie. It was high time that some sort of discipline be established in the family, for the two oldest children, Jeanne and Madeleine, were already in a fair way to become unbearable. Their sensible governess, I am thankful to say, was able to exert the right influence over their characters, which were difficult to control, though they had many fine traits. Mademoiselle Dupont also took charge of the two boys, teaching them until they started at Saint-Irénée. This was the state of the family affairs when I left home to begin my law studies in Paris.

Marguerite and I left the Hutterie early in the morning on the second of November. We went to Angers, where we took the train for Paris, arriving at five o'clock in the afternoon.

I was still simple-minded and ingenuous, and it was a real delight to have my sister go with me and superintend all the arrangements for my new mode of life. I was so proud to give her my arm, and show her about that beautiful Paris, which she had never visited before! But those happy days did not last long, for at the end of a week Marguerite returned to Anjou. She established me in a small

apartment in the Rue du Bac. There was one quite large room, which served as bed-room and parlor, and another small one where a bed could be put in an emergency, and where I could prepare an impromptu meal. I was to get my own breakfast in the morning, and my other meals I took at a boarding house, which was only frequented by students of good repute.

Before leaving, my sister made a point of going with me to see Abbé Hermant, who lived in the Rue de Tournon, Quartier Saint-Sulpice. The good priest received us with that grave, serene cordiality, the fruit of genuine charity and perfect courtesy, which seemed to me the natural outward expression of his virtues. He talked with both of us, and when we took leave he said, aside to me, "Thank God always for having given you such a sister." He urged me to come again and see him, and mentioned the hours when I would be sure to find him at home, and before we left he gave us his blessing.

The visit to Abbé Hermant made a deep impression upon us, and we felt as if we had been conversing with a saint. "How glad I am," said Marguerite, "that a priest of such piety and experience will be your director."

That same evening I took Marguerite to the station, and the hot tears coursed freely down my cheeks as I kissed her good-bye. I was unconscious of the observation of the by-standers, for at that time I did not know what human respect was. As

the train bearing her home to Anjou disappeared, a shudder passed over me. I felt as if I were all alone in the world. I was parting from my visible angel.

Until the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December the eighth, everything went well. I set to work in earnest and faithfully attended the lectures at the law-school. Sunday afternoon I spent at the "patronage" of my parish, teaching and entertaining a number of young working boys who were placed in my charge. I took the keenest interest in this work. The boys confided in me and seemed to like me, and I was very proud of them, too, interesting myself in their affairs and looking out for their future. They played an important part in my life, so much so that all the week I was thinking of my Sunday occupation. I prayed for them and tried to be better myself, so as to set them a good example. On Monday evening I went to the meeting of the St. Vincent de Paul conference, of which the patronage was an off-shoot. There I made a report of the progress of my work and of the needs of the poor families whom it was my business to visit. I was much benefited by the example and the conversation of the older men, who had founded works of charity in Paris at the expense of great difficulty and labor, and who gave us young ones the advantage of their experience. These meetings were of great advantage to me. The older men on their part encouraged my zeal, and predicted that I would

eventually be a leader in all these enterprises, and this made me very proud.¹

On Thursday afternoon I generally went into the country with some students of my own age, who were practical Catholics, and who, at the suggestion of Abbé Hermant, invited me to join them.

In short, I was most fortunately situated, and if I had experienced even a small amount of energy and perseverance, and had resolutely followed the advice of my wise and saintly director, I would not now have to mourn the grave sins of my youth.

Every Saturday regularly I went to Abbé Hermant, and confessed my faults, and received the

¹ In passing let it be said that those people are very much mistaken who imagine that Catholic charities having for their object the improvement, spiritual and temporal, of the laboring man have existed only in the last thirty years. To be sure much has been done since 1870, but let us take care not to be unjust to those who have gone before us. Most of the charities of the present day existed formerly in embryo in the St. Vincent de Paul conferences. The members of that society did not confine themselves to the relief of the bodily wants of the poor. A network of different charities spread from the conference in each parish. The Association of the Holy Family gathered together every Sunday, the father, mother and children of each family receiving assistance from the conference. The young people were enabled at the "patronage," as it was called, to observe Sunday strictly and yet agreeably. In a word, the St. Vincent de Paul Society (and this, indeed, was the object of their institute), sought to sanctify their souls by practicing Christian charity in many different forms and by various means. What they accomplished is not appreciated in certain quarters at the present day.

"Now-a-days," the director of a certain charity said to me not long ago, "we strive to win the young by means of the young. We make apostles of them. Formerly the plan was only to preserve and save them as individuals." Nothing could be more false. Let us give everyone his due and say that the younger generation has developed with much zeal and earnestness the work begun by their elders, but at the same time let us admit that our elders set the example and pointed out the way.

sacrament of penance. He always received me with the greatest kindness, questioning me minutely as to how, where and with whom I spent my time, and whether I was faithful to my prayers and other spiritual exercises. "As long as you pray faithfully and work diligently," he said, "you need fear nothing. Hell will be powerless to harm you. But as soon as you begin to relax perceptibly in either of these two things, your fall is not far off; you may rely upon that."

He knew that my mind was active to the point of insatiability, and that it was of the first importance for me to be constantly occupied. He brought it about that I formed profitable associations, and suggested useful and interesting reading and different questions for study. When I asked about going to the theater, he consented to my going occasionally to see certain plays, but he warned me against certain others as very dangerous, and made me promise never to go to them.

"Always be careful," he told me, "when you do go to the theater, not to go in company with young men whose conduct and habits are not above suspicion. Never under any circumstances go behind the scenes. Refrain, too, from supper-parties and other gatherings to which you may be invited *after the play*. Go home at once, say your prayers no matter how tired you may be, and take your night's rest.

"Shun as you would the plague, bad books and

novels which tend to soil the imagination and debase and sentimentalize the emotions.

“Finally, if you are so unfortunate as to fall into mortal sin, follow the example of the prodigal son. Arise at once, and come with a contrite heart and seek absolution. If I am not here, go to some one else. Never contract the fatal habit of going to sleep with a mortal sin upon your conscience, for you will soon grow accustomed to it, and your salvation will thereby be imperilled because the prick of remorse will no longer be felt. You will go on living in that ‘false peace’ in which the fiend puts his victims to sleep. This peace, mark it well, is not that which God has promised to men of good-will.”

For several weeks I was faithful in following out these directions, and the enemies of my welfare were powerless to harm me. I was too busy to have time to be tempted. But in the first part of December, I began to give way to slothfulness and carelessness in my devotions. Once in a while I would omit my prayers on the pretext of weariness or of being too busy. Soon I hardly ever said my morning prayers. The devil did not tempt me, be it understood, at once to mortal sin; I would have shrunk from it with horror. He proceeded more skillfully. Knowing that my besetting sin was curiosity, the desire of knowing and seeing everything, he first tempted me in that direction. Little by little I began to be less strict in guarding my senses, my eyes, my ears and, in particular my imagination. I read a few novels.

The first without being immoral in tendency drew me into an enervating and unwholesome atmosphere, which by degrees debilitated the faculties of my soul, and gave rise to a distaste for work and a still greater distaste for prayer. Those works of charity which had before been so attractive to me now seemed a task which I only accomplished wearily and without any interest.

Soon my reading became more objectionable, and yet I continued in spite of the warnings of conscience. I devoured works of this sort whole mornings at a time, and, of course, my law books meantime remained unopened. I hardly ever attended the lectures at the law-school, and certainly I did not hear them, for I was carried away by my imagination, which I now made little effort to control.

About this time I experienced a great desire to see some of those plays against which my director had warned me. I heard other young men speak of them in admiring terms, and I was ashamed of not having seen them myself. Human respect made me dread being questioned on the subject or having my opinion asked. What could I say? How could I acknowledge my ignorance?

The much dreaded question was finally put to me by a young man of very little brains, it is true, but who had a certain bravado about him and an air of knowing it all. This was all that was necessary to make him the ring-leader of a certain set. Ques-

tioned in an unguarded moment, I replied in a constrained manner that "as yet" I had not seen the play.

"But, my dear fellow," the other rejoined, "where have you been? Why, all Paris has seen it! See here. Come and go with us this evening, and afterwards we will go and get supper with So-and-so and So-and-so."

The student who spoke, Léon Carleville by name, had a very bad reputation, that I knew very well. I also recalled the plain command of my director, "No plays of this description; no reunions after the theater." I would have liked to refuse, but my imagination troubled me. "What will they say if I draw back? Carleville is quite capable of telling it around to everybody. What will they think of me?" Nevertheless, I replied rather timidly that I could not go that evening, as I had some important work on hand.

My interlocutor burst into a laugh. "Really, my dear fellow, your retreat is not very skillful. You just told me a few minutes ago that you did not know what to do with yourself this evening. Why don't you say plainly," he added, sarcastically, "that mama has forbidden you to go; it would be a little more honest. Well! Some other time, my boy, when you have gotten rid of your nurse!"

My heart beat fast, and for the first time in my life I experienced a violent temptation from human respect. I did not resist it. The way to this defeat

had been well prepared during the preceding few days, for I had almost entirely neglected my prayers.

"I have been forbidden, eh?" I cried in as bold a manner as I could assume. "What do you take me for? Just to show you that I can do as I please just as well as you, I will go with you to-night."

"Good for you, old boy," said the other. "That sounds a little more like a man," and he held out his hand, which I took mechanically without another word, for I was already thoroughly ashamed of myself.

"It would be impossible to withdraw now," I said to myself, trying to allay the reproaches of my conscience, "but this is the first and last time that I will ever accept an invitation of that sort. If it is extended again I will refuse it positively." And this assurance calmed my mind after a fashion.

More than once in the course of the day, urged by grace which reproached me for my cowardice, I was on the point of taking back the promise I had made. I commenced three notes to Carleville, in which I attempted to tell him that I had been taken suddenly ill, and therefore, much to my regret, was unable to be of his party. Then I threw aside these shuffling excuses. "What's the use?" I thought. "Carleville would not believe me, and he would make game of me more than ever. For one minute I had a little courage. I resolved to take the bull by the horns, to go boldly to Carleville and tell him plainly whether he was alone or in the presence of

others, "My friend, I was a coward this morning to accept your invitation in spite of the disapproval of my conscience. I beg that you will not count on me for to-night."

This is how a resolute and energetic person, fortified by prayer and penetrated with the spirit of faith, would have acted. Some people think that it is always desirable to avoid a scene. Even so it is always possible, when one has been guilty of a momentary weakness, to retract by means of a polite but firm note, and then to be ready when occasion offers to cut short all complaints and taunts by a plain statement of the principles at stake, thus preventing any further advances. It is highly probable that such a plan of action will insure one's being left in peace thereafter. A young man who is quiet and determined is seldom tormented.

I once knew an officer in the artillery, distinguished as much for his piety as he was for his military proficiency, who had gone through the polytechnic school at a period when true Catholics were very rare. At that time, in certain surroundings, particularly in the government schools, it required real heroism to acknowledge one's faith. "On the first holiday after the reopening of the course," this officer said to me one day, when we had been talking together, "I took a long walk through the city. Towards evening, before starting back for the school, I went into Notre Dame, and spent about ten minutes at my prayers. It seems that some of

my companions had seen me go into the Cathedral. They said nothing to me about it that evening, but the next day at recreation the proctor of our division called all the students together and, after securing their attention, turned to me. 'It appears that you went to Notre Dame yesterday,' said he. 'If you went to admire it as a historic monument, that was quite natural, but if you went to pray, which out of respect for our uniform I would not for an instant want to believe, I will excuse you for this once, because you are a new man, but I wish it distinctly understood that it must not occur again.'

"All eyes were turned on me, and I confess that my heart beat rather fast, though outwardly I managed to retain my composure, and my glance did not waver. For a few seconds I looked the young man who was trying to bully me straight in the eye, and then in a distinct and uncompromising tone I answered, 'I went to Notre Dame to say my prayers, and I said my prayers because I am a Catholic, a Catholic by conviction and in practice. This matter concerns myself alone. I hope you understand? If anyone desires any further information, I am quite at his disposal.' I waited confidently and in a cool and determined attitude. "I can assure you," continued the officer, "that the matter was looked upon as settled, and that from that time on my religion was not interfered with."

I am not saying that it is always necessary to act in this way. That depends upon a number of

circumstances, upon one's own character and turn of mind, and upon the attitude of the adversary; but that which is plain, is the fact that straight-forward, simple determination will almost always ride over the difficulty, whereas timidity, which comes from human respect, far from disarming the enemy, will lead on from one capitulation to another until at last we are brought to the point of being ashamed of our faith.

In the dilemma in which I now found myself I did not exhibit the courage of the young officer above quoted, but showed myself to be an utter coward, and after some hesitating inclination towards resistance, I contented myself with fair words, repeating over and over, "It is only for this once; I only do it to show that I have some force of character and not to appear entirely unsophisticated, which would nullify any possible good influence I might have over them in the future; but next time I will take a positive stand, and, if necessary, I will openly resist." I knew very well in the bottom of my heart that I was a coward, and that I would not resist, but I tried to deceive myself in order to drown the voice of conscience. When evening came I went in search of Carleville, whom I had agreed to meet. He greeted me with a protecting nod, and presented me to the others who were with him.

The play which they took me to see was most immoral, both in its plot and in the manner of presenting it. At first I was very uneasy. I was

ashamed of myself, and longed for the play to end. Little by little, however, I yielded to the pleasures of sense, my conscience sank into silence, and the scene before my eyes absorbed me completely. When the curtain fell on the last act, I felt as if awakening from a dream, and mechanically I followed my new acquaintances out of the theater. They led the way to a restaurant, where we were served in a private room, and were joined presently by several women who had been invited. And now for two hours my ears were assailed by stories and songs which made me exceedingly uncomfortable. I wished myself a long way off. But how was I to make good my escape under fire of all the eyes which in imagination I beheld aimed point blank at me?

Of course there was a good deal of drinking, and, although I was much more moderate than the others, I was so unaccustomed to this sort of indulgence that by the time I reached the street I was quite bewildered. Carleville took me home in a cab. "For a first attempt you did very well," he said. "In time we shall make something of you."

I was so worn out that on reaching my room I fell, an inert mass, upon the bed. It was late when I awoke the next day, and my imagination still swarmed with the evil phantasms which had passed before my eyes during that night of carousal. I remained inactive and dreaming the whole morning, without energy enough to say my prayers.

However, in the afternoon, when I regained control of myself to a certain degree, I began to realize with remorse the downward trend I had been following for a week past. Conscience pointed to several mortal sins committed with the full consent of the will, and I saw how the way had been laid for them by my lack of watchfulness over myself and my neglect of prayer during the days preceding. As I still had strong faith, I now felt real repentance for my conduct, and desiring to keep the promise given to my director, I made my way to the Rue de Tournon, and there frankly and with true contrition confessed my sins.

The good priest showed me clearly the cause of each of my falls. It was failure to keep watch over my senses, neglect of my devotions and disregard of his distinct warning not to associate with persons of doubtful character. He tried to make me appreciate the necessity of being faithful to my resolutions, congratulating me at the same time for having come at once to confession. I left him, firmly determined to break the dangerous ties I had formed.

CHAPTER XV.

EVIL DAYS.

I WAS perfectly sincere when I made these promises to my confessor, but, unfortunately for me, among my many faults there was one most dangerous, which at that time I did not fully realize, and that one was presumption. This fatal propensity, the offspring of pride, had become much more pronounced since I left college. I thought myself strong, and was certain that it was easy for me to resist temptation. Very serious occasions of sin appeared in my eyes to be almost devoid of danger, and so I did not perceive what pressing need I had of divine assistance, and my prayers were luke-warm and lacked earnestness. In a word, I did not realize my own nothingness, and I did not send up to God that suppliant cry of the unfortunate who feels himself about to perish,—that supreme appeal which on the wings of faith and hope pierces the skies, and reaches to the very throne of divine mercy.

How many young men have been lost on account of this foolish self-confidence, which makes them plunge with temerity into the very midst of danger without being protected by the arms of faith!

Returning one morning from the law-school not

more than three or four days after my interview with Abbé Hermant, I found on my writing table a novel which had recently appeared and which had already been much talked about. It had been sent by Carleville, the student who had included me in his party the week before. He sent a short note with the book: "I think this will please you. It is all the go. I have promised to lend it to two other fellows, so I wish you would finish it to-day or to-morrow. It is so exciting that you are through with it before you know it."

I paused for some time. I knew the book was an abomination, the nastiest of the nasty, but what was I to do? What could I say to Carleville when he came next day to get it?

After thinking a few minutes I said to myself: "Pshaw! The book would have been bad for me a few weeks ago, when I was fresh from the provinces, but by this time I have seen enough of the world not to be affected by a few objectionable sentences. Besides, I will only cut the leaves, and glance through the volume so as to be able to say something about it. You could hardly call that reading a forbidden book." And with this cogent reasoning I set to work to look over the novel.

I turned the first few pages rapidly without much attention to what I was reading, but soon, attracted by the plot, which promised to be lively, and ingenious and to unfold in life-like and exciting situations, fascinated by the poetry of the descriptions, the

polish of the style, the wealth of imagery and, alas! it must be said, drawn on without acknowledging it to myself by that very feature of the book which made it in the highest degree injurious, I allowed my attention to become gradually fixed, and I began systematically to read, or rather, to devour this abominable romance. My conscience made one last protest. "You are reading a very bad book, and running a serious risk. Catch yourself in time!" But by that time my attention had become riveted, intense, breathless, and the voice of curiosity was much louder than that of reason. I listened to curiosity, and heedless of conscience was soon wholly absorbed in reading. This book worked awful havoc in my intellect and my emotions. My imagination was fed upon excitement, my mind rendered for days incapable of serious application, and my heart became more and more averse to prayer and to the inspirations of grace.

I felt myself borne on towards a much steeper descent than that down which I had slipped a few days before, and yet, hard pressed by remorse, for an instant I thought of going again to Abbé Hermant. Then I put it off until the next day. Confession, which had always been so easy before, now seemed an impossible task. I made the sign of the cross, and said a "memorare." "I will go to confession, though, to-morrow," I said to myself. "It will be better." The thought of the judgment of God pursued me for a few moments, and then I

fell asleep in comparative peace. The first time that I had been conscious of being in a state of mortal sin, I had not been able to close my eyes the whole night. How soon the fatal habit had fixed itself upon my soul, of living without anxiety in a state deserving of the wrath of God!

The next morning, waking up after an untroubled sleep, I was hardly the least bit alarmed. Two or three times during the day I reminded myself that it would be well to go to confession, but my repentance grew weaker by degrees, and when evening came my qualms had quite disappeared, and without more ado I put off my confession until Christmas, which was only a week later.

During the following week I said my prayers a few times with my lips, but without any realization of my need of God, I read without hesitation several books which formerly I would never have permitted myself to open, I ceased entirely to guard my senses from dangerous objects, and I went to several plays of the sort I had been warned against as particularly dangerous. As on the first occasion, they were followed by meetings during which the most ordinary conventions were utterly ignored. And still I continued to quiet myself with the same old arguments when my conscience strove occasionally to protest. "All this was, perhaps, dangerous for me when I first came to Paris. Now that I am more accustomed to it there is really nothing reprehensible about it." I began also to say to myself, "It is plain

to me that parents and confessors greatly exaggerate the dangers a man encounters in his early career."

Poor fool! I was already in the depths of the abyss, and I complained that its dangers had been overdrawn!

There was another suggestion, too, which at first I did not dare heed, but which was little by little insinuating itself into my mind. "It is just as easy to confess several sins as it is to confess one." I did not quite dare add, "So why hesitate to commit them?" but this detestable conclusion, more understood than distinctly formulated, failed not, nevertheless, to make its impression upon me. At last the anxiety which I felt when I first began seriously to offend God became more and more vague, and I enjoyed almost complete ease of mind. I went to sleep at night without the least apprehension, after mumbling a few prayers. Temptations even became less frequent, and I concluded that the Christian life was much less difficult when one did not go to Confession so often.

Stupid course of reasoning! Is a soldier, who has surrendered, still attacked by the enemy? He is sent to the rear of the baggage. He is watched in order to prevent his recovering his liberty, but on the battlefield he no longer counts.

Ah, yes! When one is in a state of mortal sin, it is to the interest of the devil to imbue him with a false sense of security and sink him in that per-

nicious slumber which is the very vestibule of hell. The fiend takes care not to disturb him lest he might with horror realize his condition. He sometimes even ceases for a time all violent attack, satisfied that he will be able later on, when he shall have entangled it more closely in the toils, to push this soul to the very worst extreme.

Meantime Christmas Eve had come. That morning I had a letter from Marguerite. The sweet girl as yet suspected nothing. She believed that her brother was in a state pleasing to Almighty God, and that his ideas and thoughts were still in perfect accord with her own. She wrote as follows:

My Dear Paul:

I do not need to remind you, I know, of the great feast we are about to celebrate. This letter will reach you on Christmas Eve with a present from the Infant Jesus, who sends it to you by your big sister as usual. Of course you will be going to the midnight mass, which you always loved so as a child, when we lived together at Mesnil before you went to school. We used to go to confession early in the morning the day before so as not to have to wait so long, and we would be so happy going home. At night we started at eleven o'clock, wrapped up to our eyes, for it was bitter cold. You and I would go together through the darkness, over snow and ice with old Tom for protection, and he would wait solemnly at the church door to take us home again. You were too young then to go to Holy Communion, and I remember how you would push up close to me and say, "Kiss me, Guitte, to give me the Infant Jesus." Now, dear brother, you have the great happiness of receiving Jesus in your own heart. Pray to him, implore Him to grant you the strength which you lack to destroy in your heart the evil germs of human re-

spect which spring from pride, (you know that pride is your besetting sin), and to preserve you from the sin of curiosity, which has been the ruin of so many souls.

This morning I arranged a crib in your room as I used to do every year when you were at home. All during the Christmas season we used to say our prayers there before the Infant Jesus. I have put a light to take your place before the cradle of the Divine Babe. There it shall remain until the Purification. May your heart, like the little flame, live and die for Jesus only!

Let us together then, dearest Paul, adore to-night our God who alone is worthy of all our love, and ask him to unite our hearts in His grace and His love. Kiss me as I do you that we may give each other Jesus.

Your sister,

MARGUERITE.

In reading this letter I was for the time really touched, and it confirmed me in my intention of going to Confession that day. In the evening I went to Saint-Sulpice, where I knew Abbé Hermant heard confessions on the eve of feasts. I learned from the sacristan that he was out of the city, and would not return to Paris until the end of the following week. I had a great mind to make this an excuse for putting off the matter until later, and yet I felt impelled to lighten my conscience. There were a number of priests hearing Confession in the church and in the sacristy, and it would have been very easy to go to one of them. For an instant I debated, "Pshaw!" I thought, "They say it is a bad plan to change your confessor. I will come again next week." And satisfied with this good resolution, I went out of the church, and walked rapidly

away. Confession now seemed to me such a disagreeable duty that I was delighted to be rid of the prospect. When I got home I reasoned thus ingeniously with myself: "Really, I am not at all well prepared to receive Holy Communion, on such a solemn feast, too. It would be better to wait until Easter. Then I can attend the Lenten instructions, and make the retreat at Notre Dame. That would be a more fitting preparation." And I calmly postponed my confession for three months.

I followed my regular custom, however, and went to the midnight Mass, but I found it very irksome. In spite of all I could do, I was dissatisfied with myself. My conscience reproached me with the baseness of my conduct, and I could not stifle its voice. The service seemed never-ending to me, and after the communion of the priest I hurried home.

Next day I wrote a few lines to Marguerite. This reply, like all my letters written at that time, was absolutely flat and meaningless. I told her not to worry about me, that my ideas were still the same, that I loved her dearly, was in the best of health, etc., etc.

That Christmas Day was very tiresome. I thought it would never end, and did not know what to do with myself. I did not dare seek my new acquaintances or read immoral books, because I would have been afraid to desecrate such a day; so I was dreadfully dull. I would not acknowledge to myself the cause of my depression, but I could not

help comparing with my present miserable state the pure and innocent joy which I had felt in my childhood when Christmas came around once more. I recalled the gathering at night for the midnight Mass, and how we set out for Saint-Laurent across the country covered with its white mantle of snow under a sky glittering with stars. There was the brightly lighted church, the harmonious sound of the organ, the crèche where the ox and the ass warmed with their breath the Infant God just born for us. Then came the pleasant return home, where a joyful midnight feast awaited us beside a blazing fire, to say nothing of the pretty presents which the Infant Jesus had put in my shoes while I was gone. I am reminded of those lines of the poet which express so true a thought :

"A sorrow's crown of sorrow
Is the thought of happier days."

Happier days! Ah, yes! And now I was indeed unhappy, for I had lost my God, the sovereign good of my soul, and though I still believed in Him, His grace no longer dwelt in my heart!

Meantime these salutary reflections soon passed out of my mind, and the next day I resumed once more my unwholesome occupations and my idle way of living. During the days following Christmas I committed a number of grievous faults, and sank rapidly into the depths of sin, and this because, in consequence of my being unfaithful to grace, its promptings became less and less frequent, and my

heart avoiding prayer became harder and harder, and my unrestrained passions grew more and more over-weening. The enemy of our salvation had gained an important victory by preventing me from rising again by means of a good confession, and he now wound his victim more tightly in his net, and riveted his chains more firmly so as to make him his slave and effectually cut him off from the road which led back to righteousness.

For some time past Carleville had been gradually acquiring a great deal of influence over me, and the miserable fellow now exerted it for the purpose of drawing me further along on the road to perdition. During the first part of January he managed by degrees to entangle me in certain associations, the very thought of which would have filled me with horror six weeks before. I was now on the most intimate footing with the hare-brained set whose amusements he directed, and soon, through constantly mingling in their company, I came to regard as quite natural and necessary things of which I did not even have an idea before I left Anjou. I imagined that the young men who lived this sort of life must be very happy. My emotions were excited, and my head quite turned, and soon I began to feel ashamed that I had not yet taken the decisive step. Carleville and his friends played skillfully upon the fiery passion which took possession of my heart and clouded my intellect. They had perceived my inclination without my having expressed it. A suitable party

was engaged. A young person of their set condescended to honor me with her favorable consideration. She undertook to initiate me into the customs of the gay world, in other words, to smother my conscience and drag me into the vortex of pleasure. Fearing nothing so much as the ridicule of my associates, I was base enough to fall in with the arrangements made for me, and very soon I found myself as far gone as the worst of the lot, enslaved by the most degrading of bonds. So blinded was I by passion that for some time I did not realize that I was at the very bottom of the pit.

It was the state of my finances which first opened my eyes. The young person who had made it her business to sharpen the wits of the little provincial, first invited herself to dine with me. This made me very proud. Now at least I was free from tutelage and the master of my own destiny. . . . What madness! At the very moment when I was boasting of my freedom the chains of bondage were being riveted upon me!

Of course the most fashionable and most expensive restaurant was chosen. This was quite natural, and I had no objections to make. The dinner for two cost forty-eight francs. It never occurred to me to question the amount, I was too much afraid of being laughed at. I was next informed that it would be desirable to go to the opera that evening, and to this I also agreed without demur. Glory, you see, costs money! After the performance a fine supper

took what was left of my funds, which had amounted to one hundred and thirty francs! I was then permitted to call the carriage, and was told during the return drive that the evening had been quite pleasant. At parting I was given to understand that a second invitation for the following Thursday, (it was then Monday), would be acceptable. I was profuse in my thanks, and went off divided between happiness at having made a good impression and the discomfort of realizing that my purse was perfectly flat. Indeed, I was placed in a most unpleasant predicament. In a few days I would be called upon to lay myself out again, or else set at defiance all the rules of gallantry, and I had not even a single sou towards this expense. The fact that my rent was due at the end of the week also worried me greatly. Fortunately (?) for me, next day I received, a few days ahead of time, the little allowance which Charles and Marguerite forwarded every month, so I became enriched by a hundred and sixty francs. My honor was safe! I paid my landlord thirty francs for the month just past, and persuaded the proprietor of the restaurant where I took my meals to let my bill run three months. I was quite proud of having extricated myself so skillfully from my difficulties. I now had some means at my disposal! Like a fool, I was encroaching upon my future resources unmindful of the fact that I was only putting off the evil day, for in the end my family would certainly discover the truth. For the present I only considered

one thing, and that was that I was able to comply with the demands of my new acquaintance.

The following Thursday I was again accorded the favor of providing an evening's diversion. There was a repetition of the previous performance, and I went home with a hundred sous in my pocket. Moreover I had been made aware that in a few days the trifling sum of three hundred francs would be needed. Of course one could apply to one's financial agent, but such details were so tiresome. It was so much pleasanter to draw upon me, knowing that such a paltry amount could not possibly inconvenience me.

I was much peturbed. Reason and conscience both told me that to continue in my present course was madness, and I knew that I ought at any cost to put an end to this connection, which would destroy my soul and ruin me at the same time, that I was deliberately stepping over a precipice, that sooner or later Charles and Marguerite would find it all out, and I should only have the shame and confusion of being discovered wandering like a child into a path which brought up against a wall.

But my vanity was touched to the quick at the thought of having to turn back. "What will Carleville and X. and Y. and all the rest say when they hear that I have broken away?" I thought. It seemed to me that if I sought to withdraw all Paris would point its finger at me. I would be regarded as a boy, a mere baby! And then I was so proud of

having the right to be on intimate terms with a person who seemed to me so amiable and so bright, and in whom I descried so many good qualities. How jealous the others must be to see her single out a young student like me to honor with her friendship! My heart also had its say, in which poetic ideas played their part. Deluded simpleton that I was, I believed that I was loved, and I pictured to myself how, if I sundered these tender ties, I would break this heart, which was of such delicate workmanship that my desertion would deal it a mortal blow.

If at this crisis I had resorted to prayer—and I was at that time able to do so—God would have given me strength to burst my bounds and free myself from servitude; but I did not pray. All that I did was to weep and fret and try to solve the problem by *human* means.

However, I was shaken, and I would, perhaps, have yielded to the voice of reason had not my vanity been put to a cruel test. While I was playing hot and cold after this manner, there came a knock at my door. It was my new acquaintance who honored me with a visit. One would almost think she had divined the state of my soul. Good-humored, engaging and gay, she at once made herself at home, and proceeded without further ceremony to inspect my little apartment. Trunks, drawers, papers, everything was ransacked, and I like an idiot stood by without a word, while she took possession. Suddenly she stopped before Marguerite's picture, which stood on a little bracket over my writing table.

"What have we here?" she said, picking up the picture with an air of displeasure.

"That is a picture of my sister, Marguerite," I said, with a note of impatience, "Be so good as to put it back in its place."

She burst into a laugh. "You must acknowledge she is rather countrified looking, you old Goth!" she went on in a teasing tone, playing with the frame which held the cherished likeness.

Every good instinct which I still possessed was aroused at this outrage. I felt that something hitherto inviolate in the inmost precincts of my being had been menaced, and that if I permitted this most intimate sanctuary of my soul to be invaded, I should be subjugated once for all.

I was on the point of showing my visitor the door. She clearly perceived what was going on in my mind, and realizing that she was about to play her last card and that she must at any cost arouse my pride and vanity in order to overpower the good impulse which threatened to wrest me from her grasp, she began to rally me in a manner both sarcastic and pitying.

She would not come again, she said. Evidently I was not yet grown up, and she had been mistaken in supposing that I was. It only remained for her to beg my pardon for her blunder. "We will write to Mademoiselle Marguerite Leclère, and she will come in all haste to Paris to act as nurse for little Paul. A *child* encounters so many dangers in the

gay capital! Big sister will give her little brother two sous on Sunday if he has been good, and every morning she will walk to the law-school with him. She will sit behind his desk and do fancy-work, while she watches to see that he does not talk to his neighbors or stick his fingers in his nose. Bed-time at eight o'clock, high mass and vespers on Sunday, and perhaps an occasional entertainment at the patronage if Mademoiselle Marguerite deems it perfectly proper," etc., etc.

My injured vanity took complete possession of me, put to rout the generous impulses which had aroused my anger, and I was weak enough and low enough to beg that my momentary hastiness might be overlooked.

The next day, needless to relate, I was more deeply involved than ever, and as the demands of this individual grew daily more and more extravagant, I had recourse to a shameful expedient in order to procure the means to gratify them.

I wrote a beseeching letter to Lucie to ask her to send me as soon as possible a few hundred francs, which I needed very badly. My excuse was the coming examinations, transcriptions to be made, theses to be printed, the loss of my purse in the street, and so on! I conjured her above all to say nothing of this to her husband, as he would be sure to report it to Marguerite, who would then worry herself ill imagining that I was not behaving as I should and that my request could have no other rea-

son. Poor Lucie, who knew nothing of the world, took the idle talk I told her for gospel truth, and was innocent enough to send me a thousand francs immediately. She was still more foolish in that she promised to say nothing to Charles. She closed her letter by urging me not to forget to go to Holy Communion on the First Friday!!

As Monsieur Robert gave his daughter money for her charities and her personal expenses whenever she asked him, without keeping any account of it, it was an easy matter for her to renew her remittance to me two or three times during the year without anyone's being the wiser. I asked her assistance sometimes on one pretext, sometimes on another. Now it was my law library, which I must begin to get together, and which was so costly. Then I needed a piano to make my evenings more agreeable and to avoid forgetting what I had learned. This last argument was most telling in effect and won for me warm praise for my good sense and my taste for the right sort of amusements. In short, I was never at a loss for an excuse, and my credulous sister-in-law, who was far indeed from suspecting that she was accomplishing my destruction by complying with these repeated demands, always sent me the money.

Meanwhile Easter was close at hand, but I was so absorbed with my pursuit of pleasure that I could scarcely realize one fine day that we had entered upon Holy Week. The thought sobered me

for an instant, and I had a desire to return to God. The evil angel who was ever at my side, for thanks to Lucie, my companionship was very profitable, divined the cause of my pre-occupation, and had little trouble in banishing the vague leaning towards repentance. "What is the use of going to confession?" said this cruel enemy of my soul, "You have no intention of changing your way of living. You know very well it is impossible. Have you not tried it once? It is even less possible now than it was six months ago. Such notions do very well for people when they begin to grow old. Perhaps some day I shall become very pious, too, but youth must first pass by. The time to be good has not come yet either for you or for me."¹

I knew perfectly well that this was false reasoning, but it nevertheless had its effect, and stupid as I was, it was enough to cause the faint desire for freedom, which had for an instant made my heart flutter, to vanish.

That very same day I met good Abbé Hermant on a street corner. He recognized me and stopped to ask how I was getting on. As he reproached me gently for not having been to see him, I lied in order to relieve my embarrassment. I told him that I had been several times to see him and had,

¹For her the time never was to come. The unhappy creature died a few months later, the victim of a railroad accident, and passed suddenly from the pleasures of a bad life to the tribunal of the God who has said "Watch and pray, for at an hour when you think not I will come."

much to my disappointment, not found him at home, and that I had been going to another confessor as he had recommended in case he should be absent. In this way I was sure of cutting short all other inquiries on the part of the priest, who was too delicate to pursue the subject. He passed on after another pleasant word or two. Here was one more grace refused.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

I HAVE often heard young men who lived as I did give expression to sentiments like the following: It is impossible to do otherwise. Everybody does it. Confessors do not know anything about life as it really is. There is a crisis which comes inevitably in every young man's life. There is no use trying to choke it off. You might as well try to stop a torrent.

I said this as others said it, and even more emphatically and persistently, and at the same time I knew very well that I was lying, and that is the very reason why I protested so loudly.

No; it is not true that it is impossible for a young man to live according to God's law.

They say they cannot, but they are only trying to deceive themselves. They could break away from their bondage, but they love it, and will not leave it and *will not pray for the strength to leave it*. It is pride which makes them say that everyone does the same. This is their way of justifying themselves. They say that it is not weakness which makes them do what everyone does. At least they do not have to reproach themselves with being hypo-

crites. They do wrong, but they do not conceal it, whereas those who pretend to purity pose as virtuous, and at bottom they are no better than the rest. Those who speak thus thrill with satisfaction when they hear of the fall of a young Christian who has had the name of being faithful to his duties. They seem to think that such a failure justifies them in their own eyes, and enables them to hold up their heads; for they say, at least they can claim the merit of being candid. It is this sentiment, one of the basest that a man can harbor in his breast, which makes the success of Molière's *Tartufe*, and will continue to immortalize that character: "So much for the pious! They are no better than we are, and at least we do not hide what we are."

I said all this, too, and when in those accursed days which I shall mourn to my life's end, I met a young man of sound habits and irreproachable conduct, I felt a sort of aversion for him. I resented that he should be virtuous while I was plunged in vice. This integrity which of itself was a rebuke to me was odious to me, and not being able to deny it, I wished to suppress it, for its brightness hurt my eyes.

Such is the language and such the sentiments of the sinner who does not want to acknowledge his own wretchedness. I have been through it all, and I know very well that at that time I tried to lie even to myself, by saying that I could not observe the divine law and that everyone else did the same.

This last assertion was an impudent falsehood. Yes; there are young men who walk without fear and without reproach in the way of the commandments of God. I know it, and I have known such men, and they were not a few individuals here and there lost in the general crowd. They walked with eyes uplifted, and pursued their way full of courage and enthusiasm, proving by their attitude that virtue is not a mere idle word here below. It is not indeed by their own strength that these valiant Christians push forward on the arduous road which leads to heaven. It is grace which enlightens, directs and fortifies them, and this grace they obtain by persistent prayer, that prayer to which Christ himself has promised the victory.

God did not make sin a necessity. To say so or to think so is blasphemy against Infinite Wisdom and Justice. Therefore man has always the power to avoid sin. The personal experience of each one of us proves that it is always possible to resist temptation or at least to *pray* for the necessary aid, but the sinner does not wish to pray because he does not desire in earnest to change his life, because he loves his misery, because he loves the mire in which he is wallowing, because like the prodigal in the gospel he wishes to feed upon the husks which the swine eat.

One day—I anticipate events somewhat—I encountered an old school-mate in the neighborhood of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. François Charley had

remained faithful to God. He knew quite well that I was following another road, and I had, moreover, openly told him so.

“Let’s go in to Notre-Dame-des-Victoires for a moment as we used to,” he said.

The proposal was anything but agreeable to me, but I had no plausible reason for refusing, so I followed Charley after making him promise not to keep me long.

I had hardly knelt down before the Blessed Virgin’s altar when the most intense emotion surged through my whole being. The thoughts of faith awoke with extraordinary force in my soul. This was an awful crisis in my life. I felt that if I were to remain there, I would be conquered by the Mother of Mercy, *but I did not want her to reclaim me!* I loved my sinful manner of life. I loved my slavery, and hardening myself against divine assistance I rose by a violent effort, and walked quickly to the door of the church. Charley, much astonished, followed me, and when we got outside, asked me what had happened. I complained of a slight indisposition and the need of air, and after a few commonplace and constrained remarks, I left him as soon as possible in order to hide my emotion from him.

That day I was guilty of horrible ingratitude towards Almighty God, and it was only a miracle of Divine Mercy which prevented my being cast off forever.

And now came the long vacation, and I could no

longer postpone my departure for Anjou. At Easter I had alleged as an excuse for not returning to the Hutterie the invitation of a friend to spend a few days with him at his home in the Bordelais. It was untrue, and I did not leave Paris. I knew very well that this sort of a pretext put forth at the end of the school year would appear very strange and might give rise to suspicion. Moreover, I was not sorry to leave for a time the burning heat of the city, and breathe the more salubrious air of the fair valley of the Loire. And, finally, the hunting season was at hand, and I looked forward to surpassing if possible my record of the previous year as a marksman.

I had not studied at all since I had been in Paris, and I fully deserved to fail in my examinations, but at that time the examinations for the first year of the law course were mere child's play, and any student who had a tolerably good memory could, with the aid of the text-book, in a few weeks get an idea of the matter to be covered. This idea would be very superficial, of course, but it would be sufficient to carry him through. As I learned very easily, I managed to scrape through, and without passing a brilliant examination, I obtained some marks of approbation which were sufficient to save me from the accusation of having wasted my time.

I reached Angers on the second of August, early in the morning. Marguerite was waiting for me at the station with her country wagon drawn by a big

farm horse who now took Fanfan's place. We were soon at the Hutterie. My sister was overjoyed to see me, and I was glad, too, although I felt secretly unworthy of her pure affection. This was because I had not lost my faith. I was far from renouncing my evil ways, but I still experienced occasional pangs of remorse, and realized that I was traveling on the wrong road.

What a contrast between my feelings now and formerly when going home for vacation! When I returned from school my heart was filled with joy and peace, and I would throw myself into my dear sister's arms with the simplicity of a child. But now, though I was glad to see her, I was constrained and uncomfortable in her presence, and I instinctively avoided her eyes, as if afraid that clear, pure gaze would penetrate to the very depths of my soul, and probe the gaping wound made there by sin.

Marguerite's suspicions were soon aroused, for she was accustomed to read in my eyes the emotions of my heart! She did not at once seek an explanation, but I could see by the sadness which came over her that she divined a part of the truth.

The first Friday of the month of August she asked me if I were not going to church with her. I did not dare refuse, as it would give her an opportunity to question me, and I went with her to Saint-Laurent. Needless to say, I did not go to Holy Communion. I still had too much faith to commit such a sacrilege. On the way home Mar-

guerite talked of other things, and said nothing on the subject of religion.

The next Sunday I went to mass with her and the household. As yet, I had not disobeyed this commandment of the Church even in Paris, except once or twice when by culpable negligence I had failed to fulfill it, but I did not habitually miss mass.

The feast of the Assumption came, and still I did not approach the sacraments. As we were returning from Saint-Laurent, I noticed that Marguerite's face wore an expression of indescribable sadness, and tears glistened in her eyes. When we reached the house, she went up to my room with me, sat down, drew me down beside her, and put her arms around me.

"My dearest," she said. "There is surely something wrong. You never failed to go to Holy Communion on a day like this. I beg you to tell me what it is that weighs on your heart. Tell your big sister, your 'little mother.' If you have done wrong it will be forgiven, only I must know it, dear Paul. You know Father and Mother placed you, body and soul, in my keeping. You know that for your sake I have *broken my heart*. I have never reproached you with it, dear, but now you have reached the turning point in your life! So far you have always confided in me. Do not hide away now from your true, your best friend. Come! Don't be afraid. I will say the worst at once. You have

been in bad company, have run in debt, perhaps, even, you have lost your faith. Tell me what it is, and with God's help all will be well. I have some little savings which will set you straight again. But do not keep everything to yourself like this. Tell me, Oh, tell me!" and the sweet child's tears fell on my forehead.

I was deeply moved, and on the very point of laying bare to her motherly heart my own with all its load, but pride checked on my very lips the confession which was about to escape. I caught myself up, and feigned astonishment. "It is not right for you to worry so, Guitte," I said, drawing gently away from her. "I have not lost my faith, I assure you. You know that I always go to mass on Sunday. As for Holy Communion, I do not like to change my confessor, so I gave up Abbé Hermant because he is away so much. I chose another priest and I like him very well. I go to him now, and that is why I have not been to confession since vacation began. I tell you candidly that I detest changing my confessor."

"But how foolish," interrupted Marguerite, "I am sure you know Abbé Aubry well enough, our old pastor, and he is always at Saint-Laurent, and never leaves his house. You can find him whenever you want him, and you know how fond he is of you!"

"Oh, he was all very well when I was a little chap, but I don't care to go to him. There's no good insisting."

"And where do you go to now?"

"By Jove! I don't know what the priest's name is, but he suits me first rate."

Marguerite looked searchingly into my eyes, but I stood her gaze without flinching.

"It is very strange," she said. "I must believe you," and she left me to begin her round of visits to the sick.

She did not touch upon the subject again for the remainder of the holidays, but I could see that it was continually on her mind.

We were alone at the Hutterie for the months of August and September. Charles and Lucie were traveling, and we did not look for a visit from them until the next year.

The hunting season soon began, and I gave myself up to my favorite sport with my usual ardor. And then those fair days passed like all things else, and towards the end of October, after sacrificing the first wood-cocks which appeared in our forests, I buckled my valise, and once more started off for Paris.

"I do not know what state your soul is in," said Marguerite gently, as she kissed me good-bye. "I cannot force your confidence. There is nothing left for me but to pray. Only promise me two things. Say a 'memorare' every day, and never doubt my affection."

I kissed her tenderly, much moved myself, and jumped on the train which carried me northward.

The second year, November, 1860, to July, 1861, was most disastrous to the interests of my soul. I not only resumed the sort of life I had been leading, but I went much farther in my evil course. I entirely gave up my religion.

I read execrable books, much more dangerous than those obscene productions which, though they kill the soul, it is true, do not at the same time destroy faith. The writers of whom I speak now aim higher than the heart; they seek to bring down the intellect by extinguishing the supernatural light, the divine torch of faith, which illumines it. This is not the work of an instant, and so it was slowly, day by day, that I absorbed the poison fed to my soul.

I began by voluntary doubts against the truths of faith. Influenced by what I read, I took pleasure in my skepticism, caressing it and encouraging it because it spoke in the interest of my passions. I wished religion to be a lie, for if it were I might sin without compunction, and be relieved from the gnawing of conscience. Such is the history of almost all who lose their faith.

God is a restraint. If he did not exist, we could give ourselves up to pleasure, undisturbed by a single importunate apprehension, and our enjoyment would be much more free. So the head becomes the accomplice of the heart, and as grace, in just retribution, diminishes in proportion to the hardening of the will against it, the fatal hour comes

when the light of faith, flickering more and more faintly, at last goes out, and then darkness, a mortal darkness, settles down over the intellect, and because God can no longer be seen, there are loud protestations that He does not exist.

This was my story and that of many others. Everlasting praise and thanksgiving to the Divine Mercy which rescued me from this dark night, and kindled once more in my soul the flame which sin had quenched.

This year I lived on the bounty of my sister-in-law. When the law-school closed, I returned to Anjou for the summer holidays. Charles and Lucie, with their young family increased by a seventh heir, had preceded me by several days. The Hutterie was very lively that year. Jeanne and Madeleine, Hippolyte and Charles, Louise and Claire and little Jean, the latest arrival, had brought sunshine and joy with them, and the old house re-echoed as of yore to continual out-bursts of merriment and glee. Even Marguerite, who had seemed worn and depressed at the beginning of the vacation, recovered apparently her old-time health and spirits under the influence of the dear little ones.

"O, Giuventu, prima vera della vita!"

All went well for several weeks, but then the storm burst. Charles, to whom Marguerite had probably spoken of her fears in regard to me, frankly interrogated me on the subject. I was ready to

let Marguerite speak to me about my private affairs, even though I paid no attention to her advice, but I resented the interference of Charles, and, as he became rather heated in the course of his remarks, I flew into a rage, and we had a violent altercation. From that day forward I cherished bitter feelings against him, and I knew very well that I should burst forth on the slightest provocation.

The hunting season opened that year on the first of September, which happened to be a Sunday. The evening before at dinner I was arranging with Charles the details of our expedition for the next morning. We had decided to start at six o'clock, after the first breakfast.

"You are reckoning without your host, gentlemen," said Lucie, suddenly breaking into the conversation. "There will be no five o'clock mass to-morrow as there generally is on Sunday. Abbé Renard is ill and Abbé Richard will not say the first mass until eight. I have just come from Saint-Laurent, and the pastor himself told me that the hunters' mass would be omitted. So you will begin your campaign by a little act of mortification."

"Oh! very well," said Charles, contentedly. "The hares and partridges will have three hours' grace. We will start at half-past nine. That settles it."

"Pshaw!" I said with an air of supreme indifference, "we might just as well start at six."

"You would rather go to high mass, then?" answered Charles. "That strikes me as being very inconvenient."

"Oh," I rejoined coldly, "we can very well dispense with high mass as well as low mass and medium mass and every other mass."

Everybody gazed at me in amazement.

"You are joking, I suppose," said Charles gravely. And then in an under tone, "Do not jest on such subjects before the children."

I had been angry with my brother for several days, and I seized this opportunity to push him to the limit of his endurance.

"I am not joking," I said loudly. "I am not going to mass to-morrow. You are free to do as you please. As for me, I gave up believing in all that nonsense some time ago."

If a thunder-bolt had struck the dining-room, it could not have stunned them all as my words did.

Hippolyte, Charles, Madeleine and Jeanne opened their eyes wide, and stared at me in blank surprise. Lucie turned as white as a sheet, Marguerite covered her face with her hands and wept aloud, Mademoiselle Dupont, the governess, did not know which way to look, and Cillette and Lexis, who were waiting on the table, stopped near the door with their hands full of plates as if petrified.

Charles remained perfectly cool and composed, but there was an expression of deepest sadness on his face as he spoke to me gravely and severely.

"You have given us all much pain, and I am sure you will be sorry for it before long, for you have a tender heart. As the head of the family

and as a father, I am forced to protest in the presence of the children and of the servants, as they have all heard your blasphemous remark. But this does not fulfill all my obligations. I am your guardian (he laid stress upon the word). I shall be so for one year longer, and consequently it is my duty and my right to watch over your outward behavior. Mark well, I will not permit a repetition of such a scandal as this, and you must in future respect the faith in your words and by your conduct."

I got up, roused to the very depths. "I am turned out," I said proudly. "Very well! I am quite able to take care of myself. I can dispense with the ridiculous allowance, which you only made me, it seems, in order to keep me under your thumb. It will be quite useless to write to me. I will not answer your letters," and thereupon I marched up to my room, and began to make hasty preparations to leave. I was mad with pride, and intended to leave the Hutterie immediately and on foot in spite of Marguerite's entreaties and also those of Charles, who generously blamed himself for being too hasty. At last I yielded to the point of taking the carriage, and then I turned my back upon my poor family, leaving them plunged in consternation and bitter grief.

I have many a time since my conversion wept myself at the thought of the tears shed on my account by those who loved me so much. How awful to think that I was also the cause of divine sorrow,

and that Our Lord during His passion wept for me!

As I journeyed toward Paris I was pondering in my mind what I should do for a living, now that I had absolutely cut myself off from the family. I could no longer count on Lucie's assistance. Frightened by the scene just described, she had told Charles and Marguerite then and there how she had for the past two years been sending me large sums of money under the impression that she was contributing to my support and my education. This unexpected revelation was a complete surprise to my brother and sister, who now realized what must have been going on. They had not the heart to reproach Lucie, who began to comprehend what she had done, and accused herself, weeping, of being the cause of all the trouble, but her husband forbade her to send me aid in the future under any pretext whatsoever without first consulting himself or Marguerite. The poor thing promised, and kept her word.

Even so, I no longer needed her. Here is the plan I evolved for obtaining the money with which to continue my life of dissipation. I was not yet twenty years of age, and my signature being worthless, no money-lender would have honored it, but one of my associates who had reached his majority, and was heir to a large fortune, undertook to go security for me. On these conditions a usurer agreed to lend me twenty thousand francs at ten per cent., after having ascertained that the following year I

would come into possession of my property, which was worth about twenty-four thousand francs, being half the value of Mesnil and the Hutterie, the inheritance of myself and my sister. In this way a large sum of money was placed at my disposal, and I was better able than ever to give free rein to my passion for unlawful pleasures.

In order to forestall any interference on the part of my family, I left my apartment in the Rue du Bac, without leaving any address, and took up my abode at the other end of the city in a furnished apartment, where I was known under an assumed name. By this means I hoped to render futile any attempt which my relatives might make to discover my whereabouts.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ANGEL OF MERCY.

FROM the first part of September until the middle of December, 1861, I abused my health and strength by indulging in every sort of excess. I managed to get rid of fifteen or sixteen thousand francs in the restaurants or at the gambling table in the space of three months, and I was already thinking of contracting another loan on the same terms as the first, but the Good Lord did not leave me time.

For several days I had been feeling languid and tired, and now I suddenly was seized with very high fever. When the fever left me, I felt dreadfully weak and exhausted. I knew I must have the advice of a physician, but I did not want to give my address to anyone but the people about me, so I sent for a carriage, and drove to the office of Dr. R., who had been recommended to me by a friend.

All this time they were in the greatest state of anxiety at the Hutterie and at Lyons. The letters which had been sent to my address in the Rue du Bac or to the general delivery had not been answered. Marguerite was distracted. She had written to everyone who had known me when I first

went to Paris, to the director of the patronage where I used to spend my Sunday afternoons, to Abbé Hermant, to the president of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference and to all those with whom she thought I had had intercourse. All trace of me had been lost. Charles thought that as a last resort the police should be notified, and a search instituted, but Marguerite wished to avoid such measures, as she thought they would only exasperate me the more. She preferred to trust to Providence.

On the eighteenth of December she wrote to Charles: "I am about to go to Paris. I hope Almighty God will direct me, and help me to find our poor boy. I am taking all my savings with me in case my stay should have to be prolonged. I intended this money for the poor, but if it give me the means to save my dear Paul's soul, could it serve a better purpose?"

She left the Hutterie on the morning of the nineteenth and arrived in Paris that same evening. She went directly to the Rue du Bac, and finding my old quarters still vacant, she rented them by the month. The next morning at day-break she went to Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and stayed there several hours at her prayers, begging the Blessed Virgin to help her find the lost sheep. Full of confidence she rose from her knees and left the church, walking straight ahead and trusting God to direct her steps. She had not gone two hundred yards when she caught sight of me in a passing carriage. (I was just returning

from my visit to the physician.) An exclamation of joy broke from her lips. "Paul! There he is! Oh, thank God!"

Her cry made me turn. "Why, it is Marguerite!" and stopping the driver, I took my sister by the hand, and drew her to a seat in the carriage beside me.

"Unkind boy!" she said, "how could you treat us all so!" And then in alarm she noticed my appearance. "What has happened to you, poor child? Why, you are very ill! Your eyes are bright with fever. What is the matter with you, Paul dearest?"

"I suppose I have typhoid fever," I said, with a weak attempt at a smile, "at least, I have just been to a physician, and that is what he says. I cannot keep up any longer, and I hardly know what I am talking about."

"Never mind!" she said, "don't be worried. I have come just in time to take care of you. The Good Lord has sent you a trained nurse. I know something about sickness, you remember." She stopped the driver, who was taking us to my new number, and said to him, "Forty-eight, Rue du Bac." "But I don't live there any more." "Rue du Bac," she repeated authoritatively. I realized that a barrier was to be placed between me and my associates, but I made no further resistance, I was too far gone.

As soon as we reached my old lodgings, Marguerite put me to bed, and told me not to be uneasy

as she was going to get a physician and some necessary medicines. I was glad to have her near and to know that I was no longer deserted. "Now that 'little mother' has come, I have no more to say," I said smiling, "You are at the helm. Do whatever you see fit."

She left me, promising not to be gone long.

First she went to the telegraph office, and sent a dispatch to the Hutterie and to Lyons: "Paul found. He is sick. I will stay here." She then proceeded to my new lodgings, where she quickly bundled up my belongings, and had them put into the carriage. This done, she went in search of a physician, whom she brought back with her and who examined me thoroughly. He also pronounced the case to be typhoid fever, and after leaving certain prescriptions, he departed, saying he would return in the morning. Marguerite had already established herself in the little room leading out of mine, and had a cot placed there, but she did not use it, for she never left my side day or night.

It would be impossible to describe the devotion and tenderness with which she labored to save my life. For thirty days and nights the brave girl watched me continually. I was delirious from the first, and did not regain consciousness, and Marguerite would not allow herself to sleep for fear that she would lose the opportunity that a lucid interval might afford of reconciling my soul to God. For many days I hovered between life and death.

A priest came, and gave me conditional absolution and Extreme Unction, but I was not conscious. I have a vague recollection of seeing a person in black go through some motions at my bedside, but that is all. How many go to meet their God without receiving the sacraments any more efficaciously than this!

At last the justice of God was appeased by my sister's prayers and tears, and I began slowly to come back to life. I remember so well the moment when I became conscious once more. My eyes fell on Marguerite sitting in an arm-chair by my bed, saying her beads. The poor child was a painful sight to behold. She was so pale, thin and altered that she looked worse than I did. "Is that you, Marguerite!" I said, softly.

"At last!" she cried, "He knows me!" And she bent and kissed me, overcome with joy. I looked at her more closely, and I was frightened. Her hair had become gray, her cheeks were perfectly bloodless, her shoulders stooped, and a sharp dry cough racked her every now and then.

"You have over-taxed yourself, dear Guitte," I said, "You have killed yourself for a miserable wretch like me. It is all wrong."

She smiled brightly. "I am not dead yet," she answered, "but if the salvation of your soul demands it, I may have to go even as far as that! The sacrifice would be nothing to me!"

"Oh, don't!" I said, much distressed. "Don't

talk that way. You will make yourself ill in earnest, if you keep on imagining such things!"

We were interrupted by the entrance of the doctor. After seeing me, he expressed himself as being well satisfied. "You are out of danger," he said, "provided that you observe certain precautions. Before many days are over you will be fit to leave for Anjou. Meantime you must be absolutely still. But I am afraid, Mademoiselle," he added, looking at Marguerite, "that you need rest more than your brother does. It is high time you were thinking of yourself. You have gone beyond your strength." He little knew that the devoted child had watched at my pillow incessantly, day and night, for a month, fighting off sleep by the most violent efforts. It was nothing but her indomitable energy that kept her up.

As soon as the physician gave us permission, we started for home. Marguerite had seemed a little better for some days past, which was probably due to the fact that she lay down at night. She carefully attended to all the arrangements for the journey, taking a sleeping coach in order that I might travel more comfortably, and as far as I was concerned, the trip was accomplished without the slightest effort or fatigue. At the Hutterie all were in readiness to receive me, and to give me the care which my condition demanded. Native air worked wonders, and my convalescence was very rapid, so that in a short time I was able to go down stairs,

and walk a little in the garden. My strength increased visibly. It was only February, but the air was as soft and balmy that year as if spring had already come, and before long I was well enough to take drives about the country. It was a great pleasure to see once more the fair land which I knew and loved so well, and had explored so thoroughly as a child when I used to go with Marguerite on visits to the sick and the poor.

At the end of two months I was perfectly well again, but it was now my turn to be anxious. My beloved sister had completely exhausted her own strength and vitality in caring for me, and the state of her health gave me the gravest cause for alarm. To all my inquiries about her condition she would answer that she was better, that there was nothing the matter, that I must not worry about her, and that if she only had more self-control I would not notice anything out of the way; but, in spite of all her assurances, I was far from being easy. Charles came and spent a few days with us while I was convalescing, and he insisted upon Marguerite's consulting a physician. The doctor said that she was in a very serious condition and that the first symptoms of consumption had plainly declared themselves. He ordered absolute rest, said she must avoid all fatigue and take the greatest care of herself, and he positively forbade her to make her usual visits to the sick, at least for the present.

Realizing at last that it was her plain duty to take

care of herself, she promised to follow out exactly the physician's instructions.

About the end of March I left her to return to Paris. I was certainly in a better state morally than before my illness. I was touched to the very bottom of my heart by the lofty and unselfish devotion of my poor sister, and I blamed myself severely for having caused her such bitter grief. As for Charles, his conduct towards me was most magnanimous. When I was getting better I had confided to Marguerite that I had borrowed twenty thousand francs, most of which had already been squandered. "The loss of money may be made good," she said gently, "but who will restore your lost innocence?"

As soon as Charles heard of the affair he said, "I will assume the debt. We don't want our name to be connected with such a transaction any longer." He went at once to Paris, and settled with my creditors, and when on his return I tried to thank him for what he had done, he answered cheerfully, "It is not altogether your fault that you are so inclined to be rash; but now do let's begin to be more rational! I don't mean to reproach you," he added, sighing, "I know how tender-hearted you are and that it is punishment enough for you to bear the anxiety about our poor dear sister, which is as hard upon you as it is upon me."

My dear brother and sister! I loved them, and was truly grateful to them, and longed to give some other proof of my feelings than mere expres-

sions of gratitude, but as yet I could not give them the assurance for which they were waiting and hoping, and which would have amply rewarded them for all their trouble. *I believe!* No. I could not say it yet, for although a disgust for unlawful pleasures was beginning to spring up in my soul, my mind was still in darkness,—just punishment from God for having so long abused His grace.

Before I went away Marguerite asked me if the sufferings of my long illness had not revived my faith, but I was obliged to answer in the negative. “No. Perhaps the time will come. I wish I could believe, but I cannot. Pray for me.”

“Ah, well!” she said sadly. “The battle is not won yet, but it will be some day. I feel sure of it. I do not know God’s time.”

The first part of April saw me in Paris once more. I was in the best of health, and able to resume the studies which I had neglected so utterly for two years past. I began a much more regular life—outwardly at least. I no longer gambled, for I had promised not to, and I kept my word. My illness had subdued me to a certain extent, but yet I did not break away entirely from my former culpable relations. I hold that it is impossible for a young man with *no religion* to avoid violating the moral law, because, for such a one the moral law lacks its essential foundation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

AFTER my departure my sister's disease began to develop with alarming rapidity. She failed visibly from day to day. Sleeplessness, night-sweats, an unconquerable aversion to food soon exhausted her little remaining strength. Fine, thread-like lines of blood began to show in the expectorations, and then hemorrhages, more and more severe, announced the fatal progress of the malady which was fast undermining a constitution naturally vigorous, but worn out before its time by the pious excesses of charity. Marguerite was only thirty-two years old.

At this juncture Charles was ordered to Senegal as lieutenant-governor. This was a hard blow for him under the circumstances. That he would never see Marguerite again was almost certain, and, to add to his hardships, he was forced to leave for his new post quite alone. For several years past his wife's health had caused him much anxiety, and it was out of the question to take her to such a place. The unwholesome climate would have proved fatal in a few months. Lucie, on the other hand, could not bear to be left behind. The very idea upset her

completely, and she was also much distressed because she could not go to Anjou and be with her sister-in-law, but the physicians absolutely forbade it. To tell the truth, she could not have done much good at the Hutterie. She would, indeed, have been more of a hindrance than a help, for the dear little woman was not at all capable, and did not know the first thing about taking care of a sick person. It would have resulted in Marguerite's taking care of her.

So it seemed that our dear Guitte was to be left to the care of Cillette and Lexis at the Hutterie. They were faithful and devoted servants, without doubt, and had been with their kind mistress ever since their childhood, and fairly worshiped her, but the poor creatures were clumsy and incapable of giving our dear invalid the care and attention which her condition demanded.

When I heard of Charles' orders, and knew that Lucie could not go to Anjou, I at first thought of going home myself and staying until the end came; but Providence ordered all for the best. A great friend of Marguerite's, Mademoiselle de la Croix, volunteered to go and live with her and take charge of the housekeeping. This proposal was most gratefully accepted, and Mademoiselle de la Croix was soon established at the head of affairs. Her companionship was a great boon to my sister, for she not only relieved her of all external responsibilities, but cheered her, and helped her to bear the trying ordeal of her illness.

Charles and I viewed this arrangement with the greatest satisfaction. It took a load off our minds, as we had the comfort of knowing that dear Marguerite was now sure of the most intelligent and devoted care.

The good country people were in a state of utter consternation when they heard that Mademoiselle Leclère was in danger of death, and that the physicians had no hope of her recovery. Their grief was, if possible, even more intense than when she had come so near dying ten years before.

Pilgrimages to Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secour, novenas, Holy Communions, days and nights before the Blessed Sacrament,—all the supernatural means at their command were employed by the pious inhabitants of Saint-Laurent and the neighboring parishes to obtain the cure of “la sainte demoiselle,” as they called her. God had once before given her back in answer to their prayers and vows, but now their supplications seemed without effect, and the strength of the invalid rapidly ebbed away. It seemed as if heaven begrudged her to the earth, and was hastening the hour of her reward.

The people at home had no very tender feelings towards me at that time, and, between ourselves, I did not deserve that they should. “It’s too bad, all the same!” was heard on all sides, “Our dear young lady has worn herself out, and that’s the plain truth, by nursing Monsieur Paul, who has grown to be a wild fellow, if all they say is true.

He'd have done better to die after a good confession in place of his sister. If she goes he's the one that will have to answer for it to us, that's sure. It's a true saying that the good go and the good-for-nothings are hard to kill."

For several years before this the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at the Massabielle rocks had been talked about, but the pilgrims who visited the grotto were few in number at that time. The innumerable throngs which now hasten to Lourdes from every diocese of France and from all over the Catholic world to venerate the spot whereon the Virgin Mother of God set foot had not yet been set in motion. However, although the press had not then echoed through the whole world the accounts of the wonders worked by the Mother of Mercy, here and there were heard tales of the extraordinary graces obtained, and these passing from mouth to mouth finally came to the knowledge of the faithful.

Some one in Saint-Laurent had just been to Lourdes, and came back full of a miracle which had taken place there before his very eyes. The young girls of the sodality of the Blessed Virgin, of which Marguerite had been president for a number of years, listened eagerly to these reports, and all at once the same hope sprang up in their hearts. "Ah, if the Blessed Virgin would only work a miracle for us! She must do it,—we will pray so hard that she cannot help answering us. We will take Mademoiselle Leclère to Lourdes."

From the plan to its execution is often a long way with men. Women, as a rule, act more promptly.

Barely three days after they had first thought of the project twenty-five or thirty young girls of Saint-Laurent and the adjacent parishes had already obtained permission to go to Lourdes with their beloved president. Mademoiselle de la Croix undertook to unfold their plans to Marguerite and to persuade her to submit to being taken to the Massabielle rocks. At this stage occurred some delay. Marguerite asked that she be given three days before deciding so that she might pray and reflect, for she would not undertake the journey without making sure that it was in conformity to God's will. After mature deliberation she decided to go. "I do not agree to go because I wish to be cured," she said to Mademoiselle de la Croix. "I would rather make my sacrifice complete and die, for you know whom. If I consulted my own wishes, I would not go, for I would much rather place myself in my heavenly Mother's care just here where I am. But it seems to me that I have no right to deprive the Children of Mary of the immeasurable graces which the Blessed Virgin will shower down upon them at the place of her apparitions. So take my poor body there, and may the Divine Master dispose all things according to His good pleasure."

As soon as it was known that Marguerite was willing to go, there was universal rejoicing. It was

decided to start on Monday, the first of May. Forty young girls took part in the pilgrimage. The Comtesse de Saint-Julien joined the travelers in order to give them the benefit of her experience and to see that Marguerite lacked for nothing.

On the Wednesday following, our women of Anjou arrived at Lourdes, and hastened to lay their dear invalid at the feet of Mary Immaculate. For three days and nights their ardent prayers rose to heaven to obtain the favor so much longed for. Several young girls of the Sodality offered to God their own lives in exchange for the one which they wished at all costs to preserve. Some had come to Lourdes in the hope of being relieved from painful infirmities of their own, but they now in the generous ardor of their love besought Mary to leave them to suffer and to cure Mademoiselle Leclère instead.

And what did Marguerite do and say all this time? Resting upon a litter at the foot of the Blessed Virgin's image, she placed herself entirely in her hands. "I desire neither life nor death," she prayed, "I only ask that you accomplish in my soul the desires of the Heart of Jesus.¹ And yet I have one desire, O, my God, one great desire. Dear Lord, you know what it is. I thirst for the soul of my brother with the thirst that you endured upon the cross for his soul and the souls of all

¹ Mademoiselle de la Croix, the intimate friend of my sister, afterwards told me what the substance of her prayers had been during the time she spent at Lourdes.

sinners. Take me in exchange, O, my God, a life for a life! Give me life eternal for my brother, and take my life in this world. Take my body, my heart and my soul. Strike, crush, consume me, O Lord, only give me, Oh, give me through Mary the soul of this child!"

The sodalists prayed perseveringly but the Blessed Virgin did not seem to hear them. Two of those who offered up their lives for my sister were cured by the touch of the miraculous water, but Marguerite experienced no relief although she was several times immersed in the healing flood.

At the end of three days it was time to think of leaving. The return journey was a little sad for the Children of Mary, as their most cherished hopes were now disappointed. Even those who had been cured could not rejoice over it. They felt almost ashamed at receiving favors of which they believed they were unworthy. Nevertheless they left Lourdes in a spirit of resignation to the will of God. They were ready to correspond to the graces which they had received there, and they made from the depths of their hearts generous resolutions for the future. This is the great miracle of Lourdes, that Mary obtains supernatural resignation and peace for those whose prayers are not answered in accordance with their desires, and this grace, for those who can appreciate it, is far above any temporal benefit, for it increases a hundred fold their eternal reward.

Marguerite realized this thoroughly, and when she left Lourdes her face was bright with joy. "I have more confidence than ever in the mercy of God," she said to Mademoiselle de la Croix, "I am now firmly convinced that God will save my brother's soul for me and that before very long that soul will belong altogether to Him. What can all these physical sufferings, my cough and the hemorrhages, do to me now? I go away with the certainty that the vow I made seventeen years ago beside my father's and my mother's coffin has been heard. What more can I ask? And what is life in comparison?"

The journey back to Saint-Laurent was made amidst perfect calm and serenity, and on Monday the eighth of May, our travelers returned once more to their homes. They regretted keenly that their prayers had not been granted, but they submitted quietly to the will of God. "The Blessed Virgin wants her Marguerite in heaven," they said, "We are not worthy to keep her."

And now my sister grew much worse, and the physicians said that the end was not far off. Mademoiselle de la Croix notified me by telegram, and I returned post-haste to the Hutterie.

My arrival gave Marguerite great joy, and her happiness at seeing me brought about a marked improvement which lasted for some days. Spring was now well advanced, and as the air was very mild, Marguerite was even able to leave her arm-chair

and take a few steps in the garden. Seeing the renewed animation of her glance and the faint tinge of color in her cheeks, I began to hope once more, but the illusion was of short duration. The fever increased, there was a return of the hemorrhages, strength rapidly declined and my dear Marguerite never again left her bed of suffering.

God permitted this soul to undergo great mental anguish, and strange interior trials were added to her bodily pains in order to purify her and prepare her for eternal bliss. In these hours of agony she sometimes confided her spiritual experiences to the faithful friend who watched by her bedside. "I no longer know the road I am traveling," she said, "I do not know where my Jesus is any more." Then she added, "And Paul, for whom I have shed every drop of blood in my veins and my heart,—I feel now as if he never would be converted, as if he would die in his sins and all my sufferings go for nothing."

Mademoiselle de la Croix told me afterwards that this thought tortured her horribly and that one might say that for a week she underwent a Gethsemane of torment. God willed that she should taste something of the agony of His Son weeping over impenitent sinners.

As the angel in the garden consoled Our Lord, so her devout friend comforted Marguerite, reminding her of the confidence and spiritual delights she had experienced at Lourdes. The voice of Mary

had not vainly sounded in her heart, "Your brother's soul is saved for all eternity."

Our Lord Himself came to fortify his faithful servant. Every morning for two weeks one of the assistants at Saint-Laurent escorted by a number of faithful parishioners, came to bring her Holy Communion, and receiving the Body and Blood of her God, she drew thence strength to sustain the fierce combat.

After this period of interior desolation, when Our Lord had hidden His face for a time, He renewed His tender favors toward His well-beloved child, and from that time forward her thirsty soul drew long draughts from the fountain of living waters.

On the afternoon of May twenty-seventh, the vigil of Pentecost, about six o'clock, Marguerite seemed somewhat revived after a short sleep. "I would like to look out," she said. We hastened to gratify her wish, and pulled her bed close up to the window.

It was a lovely evening. The soft sweet-scented air enwrapped the fields which stretched out before us to where on the distant horizon flowed the Loire, its waters red-tinged in the rays of the declining sun. At our feet the Gemme, reflecting the emerald tints of its banks, ran singing beneath the flowering willows, across the meadows where shone "like stars sown thick" blue hyacinths and white daisies. In the wooded thickets of the garden, blackbird and linnet, bull-finch and nightingale sang in

a very ecstasy of joy, mingling their pearly notes with the harmonious murmur of the stream.

Often and often, seated at the window, my sister and I had looked out upon this fair scene. Even now I admired it still, but my heart sank beneath the pressure of an overwhelming sorrow. I knew that we were together for the last time, and that an awful void was about to come into my life. This sweet sister whom I loved more than the whole world, this choice spirit and frail graceful body that pitiless death was about to cast into the grave, my beloved Marguerite, was slipping from me to fall back into eternal nothingness!

I had then no other belief, O my God, and it was blasphemies like these that passed through my mind, even in the presence of a saint about to die!

"How are you now, little sister?" I said after a long silence, "Are you tired of being at the window? Shall we put you back again?"

"Oh, no!" she said, breathing with difficulty, "Leave me here a little longer. I love to look out over the country. It makes me think of Paradise."

"O, Lord, how beautiful are Thy works," she went on, her gaze wandering over the prairies, "and how Thou hast adorned our habitation of a day! And yet how poor earth seems when we look to heaven and to Our Father's house, where we shall enter in so soon! O Paul, what must it be up there when the figure of this world shall pass away, and we shall enjoy forever the sight of God!" Her anxious gaze scanned my face.

"Yes, of course, sister," I answered, mechanically. A tear glided down her cheek.

"Poor child!" she said. "He sees nothing beyond this life. He still does not know Thee, O my God!"

She was still. A few moments after I saw her lips move silently, her eyes look upward toward the sky and her countenance take on an expression of indescribable peace and happiness. Her gaze rested upon an object invisible to mine, which she met with that ineffable smile which greets the absent one long waited for. Now she seemed to listen in ecstasy to words delightful to her ear, and then to speak in her turn and put her whole soul into one burning deprecation.

I called her several times. She did not seem to hear. I passed my hand before her eyes, but her gaze remained fixed and bright, as if illumined by the marvelous vision which ravished her interior senses.

For some time longer the soul, although still held by its earthly bonds, remained in that beatific state, a foretaste of everlasting felicity.

At last she came back to earth, and after a long sigh turned to me with a look of indescribable happiness and affection. "Good-bye, dear brother," she said, "I leave this world in joy and peace because I have won your soul. Mary has given it to me forever. The hour is very near when you too will say 'My God, I love Thee above all things!'"

I had fallen on my knees beside her bed. Her

pure hand rested on my brow. Suddenly her eyes, closed for an instant, opened once more, her lips pronounced for the last time the Holy Name of Jesus, and then smilingly she departed from this world, just as the evening breeze bore over the country side the first strokes of the Angelus.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEVIL'S POOL (1862).

FOR a long time I wept beside the mortal remains of my beloved Marguerite. Most heavy was my sorrow, and inconsolable, for I had no hope of ever seeing again this loved being, whom death had wrested from my affection. My tears were barren and shed in vain, whereas the devout friend of my sister and our good servants, who had the happiness of believing, tempered their grief by means of the thoughts inspired by faith.

At last, oppressed by my sobs, I left the room. I felt the need of solitude and of the open air. Already the sad news was spreading throughout the neighborhood, and many people were making their way toward the Hutterie to pray and weep over the remains. I wanted to avoid the crowd of visitors and the ordeal of receiving their condolences. I told the servants to send everyone away by ten o'clock and to leave the door open for me. They were not to be uneasy in case I should not return until later.

These directions being given, I walked rapidly away, following the Gemme towards its source. I was in a highly over-wrought, nervous condition,

and felt that I must be in motion. I walked steadily for about an hour, and my nerves were quieted and my excitement calmed, and being tired I threw myself down on the river-bank to rest a while.

It was about nine o'clock. The night was wonderfully clear, and the stars gleamed throughout the entire expanse of the firmament. In my rapid course I had without noticing it reached the Devil's Pool, that deep place in the river where I had been almost drowned the evening before my first Holy Communion.

This recollection carried me back to the days of my childhood.

Once more I thought I saw my father setting out for Paris at the time of the June riots. Next it was the awful scene which followed so soon after the parting,—my mother stricken down by the news of my father's death. Then I was in Marguerite's arms, and heard her promising to be my "little mother." Marguerite! Ah, she was everywhere in my life! Her dear features with their lovely expression and motherly smile were stamped indelibly upon my heart. She had watched over me from my tenderest years, supplying with never-failing love all my needs of body and of soul. Ah, how dear I cost her! It was for me she broke her heart and that of René de Saint Julien when she refused him, although they loved each other so dearly. And later on in my boyhood how often I had made her suffer. What tears my conduct had caused her after

I went to live in Paris! And then the care lavished upon me day and night during my long illness. Then were sown the seeds of that fatal disease which had brought her to the grave. If I were still in the land of the living, it was because she had saved my life at the expense of her own. I had never seen it all so clearly as I did to-night. The thought stirred my heart to its very depths, and the tears sprang to my eyes.

At that moment my eyes fell upon the deep waters which had so nearly been my grave ten years before. It was also like to-day, the eve of Pentecost. I was returning from Saint-Laurent. I had just been to confession preparatory to receiving my first Holy Communion on the morrow. In imagination I reviewed all the details of that scene which was forever graven on my memory: my fall into the pool before Marguerite's despairing eyes, then all that had been described to me afterwards, the wild gallop to the house, Fanfan's marvelous leap over the bars and the Newfoundland tearing to the river and plunging to the bottom of the pool. Then I saw myself stretched out upon the grass and Marguerite bending over me with restoratives. Marguerite smiling and happy, saying in the fullness of her joy, "You are safe now, my dearest. Thank God, and never forget His goodness."

God! In those days I had believed in Him. And I called to mind the thoughts that had chased one another through my brain as I sank into the deep

water. "I am, I hope, in a state of grace. If I die now I shall be saved." I remembered, too, how Marguerite had told me of her prayers while I was in the water. "My God, if the child would lose his soul were he to live and grow up, do not let him come out of the water alive, because I know that now he is pleasing to Thee."

That is what I was ten years ago,—and now? What would become of me if death were to overtake me at the present moment?

Just then a vivid emotion took complete possession of me. I became conscious of the action of grace upon my soul. It impelled my intellect to adhere unreservedly to the truths of faith, truths which in my youth had appeared luminous, but which were now hidden from my eyes as it were by a cloud. "You have seen. You can see again if you will; ask God to remove the cloud." And I heard in my heart a voice which cried out to me, "Pray! Your fate for all eternity depends on this instant. If you pray, God will come to you. If you will not, you shall be cast off for all eternity."

And as on the day when I knelt before the altar in Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, a violent struggle took place between grace which sought possession of my soul and pride which rose up against it. In Paris two years before, I had deliberately refused divine assistance, had risen quickly, and by a violent effort downed the salutary emotions which had arisen within me, and Mary had not been able to reclaim

me. But to-night there was an angel praying for the sinner, an angel who throughout her mortal life had suffered in order to procure the extraordinary grace of that moment. My dear Marguerite obtained for me from the Mother of Mercy the strength to correspond to that first inspiration of the Holy Ghost. From the depths of my heart a prayer went up to God. "Mercy, Lord! I wish to believe! Help my weakness. Grant that I may see!" Immediately I felt a growing force which beat down pride by showing me my own nothingness, and I cried out again, "Lord, I am a miserable sinner. Have pity on my weakness. Give me faith." And grace flooding my soul, gently led my long rebellious will. The dense cloud which had obscured the motives of belief was torn aside, and I saw as I had seen before the impure vapors of sin had enslaved my heart and clouded my intellect. I saw how the Church is divine, how the Son of God made man has established it upon immovable foundations, because it is built upon His power and His infinite truth. The miracles of the gospel, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the testimony of the apostles, the foundation of the Church, the conversion, humanly speaking impossible, of the pagan world, the luminous trace of that Church throughout the ages and her weakness triumphant even to-day as yesterday and forever over the most formidable assaults of which the power of man is capable,—all these irrefutable reasons for our faith were focused in one stream of light whose evidence forced itself upon my mind.

I had acquired in early youth a thorough and sound knowledge of my religion, and my faith had been cultivated with the most watchful care first by Marguerite and later by the priests at Saint-Irénée, who had continued her work. Grace now enlisted in its cause this foundation of solid doctrine in order to make plain to the eye of reason the motives of Catholic belief. But the sudden and swift conquest of my intellect by the truth and the irresistible attraction of my will towards this truth newly recovered can only be explained by a miracle of grace, which had been obtained for me by the angel who was praying for me in heaven.

God had triumphed. On my knees on the river bank in sight of the deep pool from which I had been saved by God's mercy, I said over and over again my *credo*, and at each article of the symbol of faith I cried from the bottom of my heart, "Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief."

And now the powers of hell, enraged at sight of their victim snatched away, prepared to make a last terrible onslaught.

My soul was pervaded with gloom and pierced with anguish. Anxiety took possession of me, and I was assailed by the horrible temptation of despair.

"You believe? Believe if you will, you will be none the less culpable, for you will never live up to your faith. How will you be able to renounce habits of such long standing, break relations to which you are knit by the closest ties and be restrained by the

austere rules and confining yoke of religion? Do you think it possible for you to lead a pure life for the time that remains to you? Fool that you are! You are not ignorant of your own weakness. It has already been proved, and in those days your habits were not inveterate as they are now. No, No! You are asked to do that which is impossible to human weakness, and you will be damned in any case, not, perhaps, for lack of faith, but for not subjecting the natural inclinations of your heart to the rigorous law of the gospel. Wretched man! Your heart cannot live without loving, and God commands you to suppress its beating, Enjoy life then. That is true wisdom!"

Then evil voices resounded in my ears, and disturbed my soul to the very depths. I was like a vessel in danger of wreck, which during an interval of calm is about to recover its course, when suddenly it is again cast into the very midst of the tempest. And while the song of the sirens awakened sad echoes in my heart, there seemed, in the darkness, to glide before my mental vision the fatal images which had seduced my youth. They passed to and fro before my eyes, mocking my agony, and I heard ever, like the son of Monica, alluring voices murmur softly, "How can you live without me?"

I felt powerless before the assault of sensuous delights. I wished to return to God, who had but now enlightened my mind, but the phantoms of sin re-

claimed me in spite of myself, and strove to drag me far away.

And now another voice reached my heart, no longer languishing and seductive like those which had so long bound me. This clear, pure voice fell gently on my soul as snow falls upon the meadows. It was strong, too, and roused my courage and made me strong with the power of God. "My child, it is not in your own strength that you will find the secret of victory, but in God and in His grace, and this grace will always be granted you if you ask it of Him whose gift it is. It is true that you are weak, but were they not also weak, and had they not the same frail nature as yours, those young men and maidens who have entered into glory after suffering these same trials and walking by this same rough pathway?"

And it seemed to me that Marguerite was there, though I could not see her, and that the words which I had just heard fell from her lips. God sent her to help me in my terrible struggle as she had before in this very place saved me from death.

Hell was conquered. I gained a second victory. After recovering my faith I had also found confidence once more, and though aware of my own impotence, I was prepared to face the battle of life with divine assistance.

O, that marvelous night which I passed there, yielding up my soul to the torrents of grace which inundated it! O, the wonders of that Pentecost, that

descent of the Holy Ghost upon my heart and my whole being! The light from on high now showed me all my sins, inspiring in me so deep a horror for them that my tears flowed in streams. Then by that same light was manifest the infinite mercy of God, the love of Jesus Christ dying for me upon the cross and the tenderness of Mary for poor sinners.

Long I remained in prayer and when at last I arose, the dawn of the great feast already paled the stars.

I set out at once for Saint-Laurent. I was in haste to set the seal upon my reconciliation and to cast myself, poor prodigal that I was, into the arms of the Father whom I had offended. I had been preparing all the night for confession by considering my sins and by sincere acts of contrition.

I reached the house of Abbé Aubry at about five o'clock in the morning, and found that the holy old man, faithful to his life-long habits, was already up and at his prayers.

As soon as he saw me he said, putting out his arms, "Ah, my son, you have come to tell me that our dear Marguerite has left us for heaven!"

"Yes, Monsieur le curé," I replied, "she left this world last night at seven, and already her intercession has obtained the conversion of a sinner. I am that sinner, and I now come to you to be reconciled to God."

"Ah, my child, my dear child!" exclaimed the old man, deeply touched, "It has come at last! that

for which we have so longed and for which your dear good little sister offered up her tears and bitter sufferings."

I fell on my knees at the priest's feet, and I made my confession with deep contrition, to which my tears gave evidence. When I had finished, Abbé Aubry said to me, "You remember what you said to Marguerite on the eve of your first Holy Communion just ten years ago to-day? 'Can one offend God after he has made his First Communion?' You have answered yourself, my son; but take courage. There is more joy in heaven over the conversion of one sinner than over the perseverance of ninety and nine just. Live henceforth for the God whom you were so unfortunate as to betray, and may the memory of your sins be a spur to your love."

I bowed my head and the minister of Jesus Christ pronounced the formula of absolution.

"Now go," said Abbé Aubry, "and renew your First Communion on this holy feast of Pentecost, full for you of unspeakable wonders."

I took leave of the old man, and made my way to the church, where I heard mass, and received the Body and Blood of my Saviour. After my thanksgiving, during which Our Lord in His mercy showered divine favors upon me, I returned home. I was in haste to kneel in the presence of my sister's body to do her homage for her conquest, and moreover I wanted to commence at once to make reparation for the scandal I had given by signifying my repentance to all who might be present.

When I reached the Hutterie, I found the room filled with people praying devoutly. The Children of Mary of Saint-Laurent had clothed Marguerite in white, and had put on her head the wreath she had worn for her First Holy Communion. She seemed as though asleep in perfect peace and serenity. Upon her lips her last smile still lingered. Prematurely aged by trials and the long sufferings of her illness, she had recovered after death the fresh, fair looks of her youth.

I fell upon my knees and made in a distinct voice, which could be heard by everyone there, that profession of sorrow and love which Marguerite, just before her death, had said I would soon pronounce: *O my God, I love Thee above all things!*

CHAPTER XX.

FROM BEYOND THE TOMB.

AFTER praying a long time beside my sister's remains, I went to give some directions regarding the funeral, which was to take place the next day, but one. Then I sat down to write to Charles and to Lucie. My poor brother! How hard it would be for him to hear of his sister's death, away off there in Senegal, deprived of the consolation he would have found in the presence of his dear ones! And Lucie,—the blow would be a severe one for her in the present state of her health. On this account I decided that I would not announce to her directly the news of our loss. I wrote to Abbé Lefort, the superior of Saint-Irénée, to beg him to break the news gently to my sister-in-law.

When I went down to the kitchen to give Lexis my letters to mail, I found Cillette burning bundles of papers in the fire-place. "What are you doing?" I said to her.

"My mistress told me to burn all the writing I would find in her drawers as soon as ever she was dead, Monsieur Paul," she answered, "I am nearly through now, but, my, how much there was!"

A few scattered sheets had escaped the flames,

and I hurriedly gathered them up to save them from the fate of all the rest. "You should have come to me first," I said to the girl rather crossly.

"Don't scold me, Monsieur Paul," replied she, sobbing, "It broke my heart, too, to throw anything our dear mistress had touched, into the fire, but I had to do what she told me. Only day before yesterday she sent for me to her room, called me up to her bed and took me by the hand and said, 'My good girl, after I am dead you are to take all the letters and writing out of the chest of drawers and the desk, and burn them all—every bit. I wish it. Do you understand?' 'Yes, Mistress,' I said. 'Very well,' she said, 'I trust you, then.' So you see, Master, it was the only thing I could do."

I knew that Marguerite was accustomed to write down her private thoughts and opinions on matters which interested her, and I had looked forward to keeping those precious note-books for the rest of my life. They seemed almost like relics. I was bitterly disappointed to discover that my treasures were already destroyed. I told Cillette to give me all that she had not burned, and I hurried back to my room to read and put in order what little remained. There were only about twenty scattered pages, some of which were scorched and illegible, together with a dozen or so of letters. (My sister always kept copies of her correspondence.) This was all. The gleanings were poor indeed compared to the plentiful sheaves that were lost, for Cillette acknowledged

that it had taken her two hours to burn the papers she had taken from the secretary. "I never would have believed," she said, "that anybody could write as much as that!"

On my knees I read those precious pages. I transcribe them simply according to the date of their writing. I have indicated by asterisks the places where the flames had done their work.

[*Fragment from the Journal.*]

La Hutterie, July 1, 1848.

Here I am left alone in the world! My beloved father killed at the barricade after leaving us only three weeks ago in perfect health and vigor, and poor mother carried off by the terrible blow.

We were so happy one month ago, and now how terribly lonely and deserted I feel! The house seems so empty and desolate! I am afraid to look into the future; it seems so gloomy. In a few days Charles will leave me to rejoin his regiment. And poor little Paul, an orphan when he is only six! After this I must be father and mother to him, and I am only a child myself—not yet eighteen!

Yes, I know, I have promised, have bound myself by a vow to mother to consecrate my life to my little brother. I have promised Almighty God, too, and in spite of all this I am afraid. I shrink from the heavy cross which has fallen upon my shoulders. I feel as if my life, although it is only just begun, is from this time forward blighted, crushed, annihilated. I will keep my word, but how dear this child will cost me! I know that I, too, had the vocation to bring up a family, to be a mother. How tenderly I would have loved my husband and my children. But now I am like a widow already, whom every one will avoid, because I am almost reduced to poverty, and I have to take care of Paul besides.

But how can I talk like this! Selfishness must have

taken deep root in my miserable heart, for if I loved the cross ever so little, I would lift it bravely instead of dragging myself along beneath its weight like the miserable coward that I am. And Paul, poor little soul! how much he loves me! He trusts me and calls me his little mother. If it were not for me his bodily welfare and even more, the health of his soul, would certainly be endangered. Father and mother have left him to me. God himself has placed him in my arms, and shall I be so wicked as to fail in my task and abandon him? Never! I am his mother, and I will be until death. I love him dearly now, but I will ask God to make me love him more and more.

A moment ago I was complaining of being left alone. How could I say so! God is here. I am not alone. My heavenly Father is always with me, and Our Lord, who lets me receive Him almost every morning. How can I be so ungrateful as to feel deserted when the Beloved of my heart never leaves me!

What I dread most is that we have to go and live with Aunt Dumoulin. She is a good woman, but her manners are common and so are her thoughts. What delightful conversations we will have at table! And then her disposition—she is so queer in some things! And then I am so quick-tempered and hasty. Why, I even used to answer mother back sometimes! I am so afraid I will not control myself.

But, there! Let us take things little by little as they come. For every day its little drop of myrrh. There will be nothing very heroic about it, but in this way one can get nearer and nearer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and at last leave self behind, and live only in Him and for Him. It will not be the work of a day or an hour or a year. It is the blessed end toward which we tend continually by constantly repeated victories over self. . . .

[I find this on the corner of a page which must, I think, have followed the above]:

This is the trial that I dread. I feel sad even unto death, but I will not listen to myself, and in the days to

come, in all the difficulties that I am sure to encounter, I will just say over to myself in a generous spirit my dear motto, "All for Jesus, come what may!"

[*To her brother Charles.*]

MESNIL, July 15, 1850.

My dear Charles:—

The news you have to tell is very pleasant. And so you are soon to be married! I thank God for it, because all the circumstances which you mention go to show that your union will be blessed and that you will be very happy. Lucie Robert has, or rather will have an immense fortune. "This is no harm," you say. True, and yet, dear brother, if I did not know you so well, I could not help being a little worried at the thought of your suddenly becoming enormously wealthy. I know this fortune does not belong to you personally, but it is practically the same thing, as your intended is the only child and Monsieur Robert means to make you both a considerable allowance. That which prevents my being very anxious is the simplicity of your tastes, your spirit of faith and your love of the poor. These characteristics will, I hope, help you to be a "good rich man." But even so I am a little doubtful, because I know how easy it is, when one has great riches, to become attached to them without knowing it, so to speak, and to become proud of one's station and end by gradually putting worldly advantages before the things which are eternal.

There is still another thought which might disturb me if I did not know my brother's heart so well, and that is that henceforth there will be a great difference in the eyes of the world between Monsieur and Madame Charles Leclère and the poor orphans of Mesnil. But you may be sure that on that score I am quite easy, because I know that you would give all the treasures of Peru for your little Paul and your sister Marguerite.

You say that Lucie is serious-minded and truly pious, and that people of sound judgment praise her qualities of mind and heart. You are congenial, you love one another

and the father is satisfied, so all is as it should be. Those who are fond of a mean joke might say that the crowning point of your good fortune is that you will have no mother-in-law. But you are too sensible and too kind-hearted to even think of that.

It looks now as if it would be out of the question for me to go to Lyons in time for your wedding in the second week of August. I have too much to do here. There is at present a great deal of sickness at Saint-Laurent, and a good many are in danger of death. I may be of some use to all these poor people. Then, too, I am a little uneasy about my aunt's health, and I do not think I ought to leave here just now. In spite of all this I will do my utmost to go to you, even if I can only stay two or three days. It would be hard for both of us not to be together for such a momentous event. But in any case you will not blame me. You know that I am with you in spirit and that I will pray fervently for your happiness. Tell Lucie I shall be so very glad to see her. I have set my heart on having you at the Hutterie, your *country seat*, for two weeks of your honeymoon, and I have already given orders to have everything ready for you by the end of August. What a happy fortnight we will spend together! The little green pathway between Mesnil and the Hutterie will be used very often then, I am certain.

Our life here is very monotonous, as you know. The ideal does not rule at Mesnil. But do not be uneasy. Everything goes on well. Paul is really remarkably good. He is just eight, but he has grown so you would think he was twelve. His rapid growth does not seem to affect his health at all, and he is perfectly well. He is hungry as a wolf, sleeps uninterruptedly from eight o'clock every night until six the next morning, and he laughs and plays blissfully except when lesson time comes, and then I make him apply himself in earnest. So far he has not given me a bit of trouble, although his temper is as quick as gunpowder. I anticipate difficulties—serious ones perhaps—in the more or less distant future, but just now all is serene.

As for me, sometimes I am a little sad, but it is nothing. It will pass off.

You make me laugh when you say you want me to marry your friend, A——, staff-officer to General de Castellane, that the matter is being arranged and this excellent man will *accidentally*, be in the neighborhood of the Hutterie during your stay there, and you then mean to present him to me.

Get all that nonsense out of your head. I forbid you to have him come here. I am in earnest about it. You know very well that I will not marry, at least not for the present. We should have to ask Master Paul's consent, which would in all likelihood be withheld, and then we would have a "respectful summons" on our hands! But I am wasting my time with all this nonsense. A thousand good wishes to Lucie, and may we soon have the pleasure of seeing her.

Your sister,

MARGUERITE.

(To her Sister-in-law.)

MESNIL, September 15, 1850,

My dear sister Lucie:—

I have been with you in thought and desire very often since your departure from the Hutterie. The days you spent with us seemed very short, and I can hardly wait for the time to come around which will bring you to our Anjou once more. Do not think that I am paying you compliments, dear sister; I am perfectly sincere in what I say, and I thank God for giving you to my brother. For a long time I have been praying to the Blessed Virgin to help him to find a true Christian wife whose ideas and sentiments would be in consonance with his own, and now my prayer has been answered. As for you and me, dear Lucie, we love each other and sympathize with each other and this is another favor for which I must thank Providence, for this perfect accord does not, unfortunately, exist in every family. Paul overflows with gratitude to you for all the toys you brought him. But enough, if you

please! Do not give my little brother another thing for a year at least. Otherwise you will spoil him for me, I can see that plainly.

[*To the Same.*]

MESNIL, September 18, 1850.

How can I thank you for your thoughtful gift? I had hardly sent off my letter of the fifteenth when the handsome phaeton and beautiful little horse of which you write arrived. He is a very valuable animal and must, so they all say, have cost a pretty penny. I really am embarrassed at having you spend so much money on me. I tried my fine steed yesterday with Madame de Saint Julien, who is a judge as you know, and we were delighted with his spirit, speed and endurance. Paul is teasing me to allow him to get on his back. So far I have been afraid to let him, but the horse seems to be so gentle and so well trained that I shall probably end by yielding.

Many rich people might well envy me my turn-out, and I shall feel very grand, rolling along like a fine lady in such an elegant equipage. If I get to be very vain, whose fault will it be?

I was just about to seal this letter when the beautiful Érard piano came. Really, dear Lucie, it is too much. I am overcome with grateful feelings which I do not know how to express. The only thing now is for you to come again very soon. We will give, you and I, delightful concerts, and take some glorious drives in your little carriage. I will show you the beauties of Anjou. Of course, here, you can not have

The rest is missing.

(*To Father N———.*)

[This religious had the year before given a retreat at Angers, which Marguerite attended. After that she sometimes wrote to him for advice.]

MESNIL, September 20, 1852

Reverend Father:—

When I took leave of you at the close of our retreat last October, you were so good as to point out to me what ought

to be the key-note to all my spiritual life. "Confidence, my child," you said, "Confidence! Absolute, unwavering confidence! In the tempest or in the deepest shadow, confidence no matter what happens, confidence always!"

I do all I can to have confidence, but, Father, sometimes it is so hard! And how soon confidence vanishes when one is oppressed by weariness and disturbed by fears.

Ever since last year interior desolation and dryness have noticeably increased. You predicted this, and you do not consider it to be a sign that I am losing ground, but rather an indication of progress, as long as I do my best to be faithful to prayer and to my daily duties.

I wish to obey and to pay no attention to the temptations to despondency, but I find it very hard.

People think that I pray easily and with unction and that I have much devotion and am filled with heavenly delights when I go to Holy Communion. This makes me laugh to myself. I, who am like a stone when I receive Our Lord! The other day a young girl of Saint-Laurent, a Child of Mary who belongs to the Sodality of which I am president, said to me innocently, "O, Mademoiselle, I wish I could pray the way you do and be as happy as you are when you receive Our Lord. Tell me what you do." She went wide of the mark, poor child! I don't remember now what I said to her. Some foolishness, I suppose.

But the thought that torments me more and more is, am I pleasing to God? Am I in a state of grace? Shall I be saved? It seems to me that I do not love Him. Then again I imagine that He does not love me any more, and does not desire my salvation. I try to shut my ears to these suggestions of the evil one and to go on just as usual, but I am in great need of your help. I feel as though the heavens were as brass above me, and I could not penetrate them. And then comes the thought, "You have done your best, but your work does not please God. You will never be able to reach him."

How wrong it is for me to have so little trust. God has so plainly helped me in my temporal affairs! How much

more will He come to my aid in this matter of my soul's salvation. A few months ago—I told you about it, Reverend Father—my brother Paul fell into the river in a place where the water was very deep, and I started at a gallop for the house to fetch the dog who was eventually the means of saving the child. While my horse was carrying me along with incredible swiftness, I was terrified by the thought that the animal would never be able to take the gate which gives entrance to our place. My brother's life depended on his strength and agility. "Dear Lord," I prayed, "unless you give Fanfan wings he will never be able to clear the gate, and Paul will drown!" And then I was borne over the obstacle by a leap of six feet and landed safely on the other side of the wall! And going back my horse made the same jump successfully a second time.

My good angel must have helped me, because the thing seemed physically impossible. We tried several days later to make Fanfan, with Paul on his back, take the gate he had cleared so easily the day he carried me, but, in spite of all our urging and his efforts, he could not do it. Was not the intervention of Providence plainly to be seen in this instance?

Sometimes I say to myself, when I think of how I was assisted that day, "Are you going to fail in gratitude to Almighty God! Can you really think that He will not help you also to overcome"

[*Fragment from her Journal.*]

September 21, 1854.

Dear Lord, I am in such a quandary! I do not know what I am to do about Paul. Until lately my task has been easy and grateful, but for the last few months the poor child has taken it into his head to be contrary. To be sure he is not actually bad. He does not like to give me pain, and his affection for me is still very strong. But he is developing such ardent passions, such tenacity of purpose and such intense desires. The ego is rapidly taking on alarming proportions. He wants his own way at any cost. I can

not see that so far he is attracted by what is absolutely bad, but I fear he soon will be if his pride is not humbled. Only God can accomplish this. As for me I feel more and more my own incompetency. The boy is not thirteen yet but he looks as if he were fifteen or sixteen, he is so robust and so large. He is almost a young man. What frightens me most of all is that he is not so pious as he was, and now is the very time when he needs God's aid the most.

He is very, very fond of me,—that I know, but he has less respect for me than he used to have. He fears me very little even now, and the time is soon coming when he will not fear me at all. I do not know how I can manage. Last week he was impudent, and would not obey, and I punished him, too severely perhaps, too quickly I know, for my impatience got the better of me, and he realized that I was giving way to an impulse of anger and of self-love, so the correction did him no good. He sulked for several days, and I saw that he was growing bitter and beginning to slip away from me. I held to my point, however, and insisted that he submit and that the punishment be carried out to the end, but since then I have been afraid to use the same means, for an ardent disposition like Paul's, rough and tender at the same time, requires very delicate handling. But then how am I to avoid going to the other extreme? Last Thursday after a misdemeanor of the same sort, I let myself be kind and gentle. At first this method seemed to be just the right one. The child threw his arms around my neck, and begged my pardon. He was very gentle and tractable as he knows how to be very well when he wants to. Undeniably, the second plan is easier than the first, and does away with a disagreeable and wearing struggle; but it does not mend matters at all. Moreover, just try to be strict again after being kind for a while! Ever since Paul perceived that I yielded, he has been harder to manage than ever, and now he will not brook the slightest correction. Ah, how hard it is to strike the golden mean in bringing up a child! Father and mother help me now, for it was you who charged me with this laborious and difficult work.

I am thinking whether it would not be better to send him to school. There he would have to bend his will to the rigor of the rules. Of course my heart fails me at the very idea. The child is a great joy to me and my only consolation, even though just now he is not on his good behavior, for I have lost everything else, and the Good Lord has put into my heart a love for him which increases all the time. However, this last consideration must have no weight. By this time I ought to be accustomed to the pain of parting with those I love, and if I see plainly that Paul's own good demands this step, I will not hesitate. But then I am so afraid he may have bad companions. He is so easily influenced that he has to be watched continually, and this would be impossible at school. O, Lord, show me what I ought to do!

I have thought of trusting him with Charles to be sent to Saint Irénée at Lyons, of which I have heard good accounts, but I am afraid of Lucie's kindness of heart, which is degenerating more and more into absolute weakness, and which would be very detrimental to the success of this plan. My poor sister-in-law has many excellent traits, but she is entirely lacking in firmness, and devoted as I am to her, I can not be blind to this defect. Dear Charles worries a great deal about it, because he foresees that later on it will be very hard indeed, for their children. I must pray more and ask others to pray that I may know what I ought to do.

[*To Lucie.*]

MESNIL, December 15, 1854.

My dear Lucie:—

You have often asked me to speak freely to you and to tell you candidly what particular faults and imperfections I noticed in you. I know that you have a sincere and earnest desire to correct your faults so as to fit yourself for the important duties God has imposed on you. You are really humble, and so I can speak with perfect frankness. And now, after asking Our Lord to bless us both, I am going to call your attention to a fault of which you are uncon-

scious, but which will unfit you entirely for the duty of bringing up your children properly. As a wife you are almost perfect, though if you had a different sort of a husband you might not, perhaps, have all the qualities necessary. Charles has a firm, decided disposition, and you have only to be gentle and affectionate with him, and you will always be in accord with one another. But, dearest sister, you are also a mother, and as such you have even heavier obligations to fulfill. You are pious, affectionate and devoted, never sparing yourself trouble, and, indeed, in this last respect you are more apt to sin by excess than by falling short; but you are so very indulgent—so weak. You must realize this and try to overcome it. You cannot say, “No.” You are so afraid of repelling, of opposing or of humiliating people, and yet there are so many occasions in life when this becomes a duty, a disagreeable duty, no doubt, but still a most plain, necessary duty. This fault with you arises from self-love; from an excessive desire of being liked, of being in sympathy with everyone, and also from that love of ease which dreads and avoids a struggle or the effort entailed by opposition. Your little girls are still too young to have suffered to any great extent by this short-coming of yours, but the day is not far distant when your lack of energy and decision will be the cause of serious harm. Unless you begin at once to be very severe with yourself on this point, and undertake to correct it in earnest, your girls will grow up to be women of no force of character, weak-minded and utterly incapable of bearing trouble or pain. What sort of a preparation is this for the great duties which await them in after life? Your boys will take mean advantage of your indulgence, and will be able to do whatever they please with you by means of an endearing word or a caress. (It is so hard for mothers to steel themselves against such arguments as these!) But do not be deceived. This demonstrative affection is sometimes altogether on the surface, and is very different from real, true filial love, which is inseparable from due respect. Now an indulgent mother never inspires the respect of her

children. She very soon loses her influence over them, and before long her authority is no greater than that of a nurse-maid. Her boys are quite beyond her by the time they are thirteen or fourteen, and then there are loud exclamations, pathetic appeals and tearful scenes, which are absolutely devoid of effect.

How much harm you have already done Paul by your want of firmness! I trusted him to you to make a man of him, and you have given way to his every whim. Two days ago I heard from a trustworthy source all about his misbehavior during this first term. O, if I had only known!—It was not for this that I parted with him in spite of its almost breaking my heart. It was decided that Paul was to go to boarding-school, and yet you kept him with you, and allowed him to be present at all your concerts and evening entertainments,—a mere child like that, who had never known anything outside of our quiet home pleasures and the out-door life of the country here in Anjou! How could he apply himself under such conditions? Was that fulfilling your promise to me?

No; I am not at all pleased. I blame you severely, dear Lucie. My affection for you, which I know you do not doubt, gives me the right to speak in this way. I insist that Paul be placed at once in boarding-school. If this is not done within the week, I shall go to Lyons myself in order to rescue him from your misguided affection, which is positively dangerous for him. You must not be angry with me, dear, for speaking so harshly. I know your humility, and I am convinced that it is your due to be informed of the plain truth in this matter.

From your sister, who loves you very dearly,

MARGUERITE.

[*To Charles.*]

MESNIL, August 15, 1855.

My Dear Charles:—

I sent you a line to let you know of the safe arrival of Paul, whom you were good enough to accompany as far as Paris. I want to tell you, now that I have had time to ob-

serve him, how well satisfied I am with the results of his year at Lyons. After such a bad beginning as his first term was, who would have believed that he could make such progress and change so radically for the better? Our Lord has brought this about, and we must never cease thanking Him for it.

And then the child's health is so good. This is not the most important point, but it is a great one with me. I am not "Mother" for nothing. He has grown a great deal and at the same time he has gained in strength. It is laughable to see him pulling at his moustache, for it is all in his imagination. There is absolutely nothing in sight.

Another amusing thing is that in spite of his age he is a perfect child still. I am by no means sorry to see this. May he remain as he is for a long time to come! For the present his dog, his horse and his gun are sufficient to make him happy.

You still talk about your staff-officer. I have already said "No," to you very plainly. Why do you

[*Fragment from the Journal.*]

September 2, 1855.

— What a dreadful day yesterday was! What a terrible struggle! I needed so much help, and Thou didst not withhold it, O my God. Until now I have refused all proposals of marriage without the slightest feeling of regret, but Almighty God willed that I should gain some merit by my sacrifice, and that it should cost me something to have adopted my brother and to devote myself wholly to the work of his soul's salvation. The Good Lord allowed me to be attracted by the true worth and the fine character of René de Saint-Julien. I did my best not to allow this feeling to take possession of my heart, and it seems to me that on that score my conscience is clear. I only went to Aulnaie when I could not possibly avoid it, and I even ran the risk of appearing to be ungrateful to the countess, who

has been so very kind to us. In spite of all I could not help loving René, and the knowledge that I must break his heart was such torture to me yesterday that I almost gave way. I would not have done wrong to yield, it is true, because I am not in conscience bound to make this sacrifice for Paul. Moreover I do not think (though I may be mistaken) that I have any vocation for the religious life. Nevertheless, if I had yielded, I feel that I would have been ignoring not the express will of God, but that inspiration which impells me to keep myself for God alone. I have a feeling that I have been singled out as a victim, who must be ever ready for immolation, a feeling that the salvation of my brother depends on my willingness to sacrifice myself without reserve. This idea is not a consoling one, and naturally I wish that it did not present itself, but I have a most distinct impression that this is my special vocation, and I would have been ashamed had I allowed sympathy for René or for his mother to move me.

May Almighty God accept my sacrifice and deign to place it in the scales of His justice against the time when my poor Paul may have need of it. May he also console me or at least strengthen me a little, for I am so weary from this struggle against my own heart. O Lord, put the thought of all this out of my mind that I may have no desire except to serve Thee without reserve.

[*To Mademoiselle de la Croix.*]

MESNIL, October 8, 1855.

My dearest Friend:—

You must know that I am said to be run down, and that I am under strict orders to take care of myself. It seems to me that I am plenty strong enough and that there is nothing the matter with me but laziness, but the fact remains that our good doctor and Abbé Aubry have laid down the law, and I can but obey. I am allowed to visit the sick occasionally, but they have forbidden me to sit up at night or to teach catechism for a few months at least. They prescribe plenty of fresh air, horse-back riding and driving,

and wish me to have diversion. This last is the hardest part of it; for you know how I dread society. Fortunately for me they agree to let my books and my dear piano supply the desired distractions. As far as reading and music go these orders are much to my liking, for I am, as you know, insatiable in those two respects. I know that it is very important for me to keep these two desires of mine within bounds—not, indeed, for the benefit of my health, for reading and playing agree with me wonderfully, but on account of my spiritual progress. I know only too well that I give myself up, with an ardor which is too natural to these pursuits, which, though good in themselves, hamper the soul unless they are perfectly in accordance with God's good pleasure. Yesterday, the Good Lord plainly willed that I should have a lesson. I had made many delightful plans for the day. Paul has gone back to Lyons, so just now I am almost entirely mistress of my time and my actions. I promised myself that I would spend the whole morning reading, either in my room or down by the river, according to the state of the weather. I thought I would get at a sermon of Bossuet's, which I had never finished, and the first few pages of which had quite carried me away. (It is the sermon for Passion Sunday on "Hatred of the Truth"). I was going to take with me a volume of poems, which I have just received. The author is quite unknown, but some passages are exquisite. In short, my little literary feast promised to be very appetizing. In the afternoon after a walk of an hour or two, I was going to practise some Chopin mazurkas and one of Mendelssohn's songs without words which Lucie just sent me. It is a long time since I had in prospect such a delightful day. I was thinking of it all the time I was going to church, and even during Mass and my thanksgiving after Holy Communion. Alas! I confess to my shame that these distractions were voluntary. True it was not a grave sin, but it was a venial sin, and for one who has received such particular favors as I have, such weakness is the height of ingratitude. I am glad that I realize this. It is a grace.

But do not be afraid! Our Lord in His goodness very soon made me sensible of my fault, and punished me for it, too.

As soon as I returned from Saint-Laurent I took my breakfast and started for the Gemme with my dear books. The weather was perfect. It was one of those fine October mornings which, in my opinion, surpass the splendors of summer or the smiles of spring. The foliage is so varied, the colors so warm and the sky so pure and clear, especially in the morning and in the evening. Nature has begun to take on that tinge of melancholy which has for some minds a peculiar indefinable charm. So I set off in great glee, and was just about to take flight with Bossuet, when I saw my respected aunt coming toward me in rapid strides. Hardly within earshot, she began to call, "Marguerite! Come here a minute, child, I want you." I went to meet her, prepared for something disagreeable. "I depended on you," she said, "to help me this morning. We have to weigh the heaps of fertilizers which came last week. There is some for you at the Hutterie, and there's mine for Dervallière, Sorinière and the Clouet farm. I cannot do it by myself, because it has to be measured and the calculations made at the same time. Two can do it much faster. It will take us all the morning as it is. It will do you good. Durand wants you to have exercise." I dropped my head, and in the first instant of disappointment I came very near showing my ill-humor, but after a moment's thought, I said to myself, "Our Lord is giving you the opportunity of a more generous offering to Him." So I put my books in my pocket and told my aunt I was very glad to go with her. "All right," said she, "You are a good girl, and I am glad to see that you are beginning to take an interest in matters about the farm. You haven't long to learn, little one, for I shall not be here much longer." I followed my aunt, forcing myself to be pleasant, but how I raged internally! Stable manure, and cow-house manure, fertilizer from Angers, Saumur and Nantes, all must be measured, put down, added up and—smelled. All this was rendered

more agreeable by the detailed and minute explanations of my aunt, who seemed prodigiously interested in the work.

After dinner I thought I would make up for the morning by a little Chopin and Mendelssohn. Alas! If I did not detest puns I would say that in music I had nothing but "contretemps" that day.

I had spent about fifteen minutes on Mendelssohn's romance in A and was quite fascinated by it. Do you know it? It is charming, and when you come I will play it for you. Well, I was quite absorbed, and had forgotten everything, when suddenly Cillette rushed into the room with ear-splitting shouts of "Come quick, mistress, come quick! Pastourelle at the Clouet farm has taken sick. They don't know what's the matter with her. I believe it's the falling sickness." You can imagine Mademoiselle Cillette. She combines the functions of farm-hand and lady's maid.

Good-bye to Mendelssohn and Chopin! I hastily closed the piano and hurried to the farm. The good woman was quite seriously ill, and I was kept there until seven in the evening. And so Mademoiselle Marguerite, the Good Lord gave you another little lesson!

Good-night, my dear, come soon, and help me to amuse myself according to orders.

[*To the Same.*]

October 11, 1855.

Yesterday was spent much more agreeably than the seventh. If you had only been here it would have been perfect. It pleased Our Lord after the reprimand of the other day to send a little recreation. It is sweet to thank Him for our blessings as well as for our trials.

I have been advised to be in the open air as much as possible, and as the weather was glorious yesterday, I made up my mind to take a long drive. I took some books and a luncheon, and started off in the phaeton, driving Fanfan. As I went down the avenue it occurred to me that I might invite Adèle Hardy to go. You know that in spite of her really excellent qualities I have a natural and pronounced

antipathy to her. There is no harm in saying this to you. I argued with myself against inviting her, because, if she went with me, I would be dreadfully bored for a whole day, and would go home in the evening with a violent headache, which would be quite contrary to the orders of the Faculty. At the same time this was such a good opportunity of overcoming myself and gaining a little merit that I did not think that I ought to let it go by. Then, too, poor Adèle has many things to disturb and annoy her just at present, and I knew she would enjoy the outing, so I concluded to stop for her. Three minutes later I was at the notary's door. It was then half-past eight. I said to the maid, "Will you please ask Mademoiselle Adèle if she would like to take a drive with me this morning? We will take our luncheon with us and be back between six and seven o'clock."

Presently the maid came down again. "Madame Hardy is very sorry, but Mademoiselle Adèle is out. She will be disappointed when she learns that Mademoiselle Leclère has been here." "What luck!" I said to myself. "You must tell Mademoiselle Adèle that I am sorry she was not at home," and I signaled Fanfan to proceed. "If only I do not meet her at the cross-roads of Croix Rouge!" thought I, "She goes that way often in the morning."

Sinful nature again had the upper hand. I had made my act, but I now hoped to get off without having suffered anything but the dread of it. "I positively must get to the cross-roads as soon as possible," I said shamelessly, "Once past Croix Rouge I have nothing to fear."

Instinctively I gave Fanfan a sharp cut of the whip, for the first time in my life, and he darted forward much amazed, I am quite sure, that his mistress should so suddenly adopt harsh measures toward him. In the twinkling of an eye we were at the cross-roads. Not a sign of Adèle to be seen. I was safe. I checked the speed of my little horse, and continued on my way, laughing at my own meanness and want of courage.

It was a day of real rest and recreation. After a charm-

ing drive through the valley of the Gemme, I turned off towards Saint-Florent, where I determined to stop for a few hours. I put up my carriage and horse at the "Silver Springs" inn and went to get my luncheon at the house of a former tenant of one of our farms. The good woman—her name is Rossignol—was delighted to see me. After luncheon I made a little visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and then set off for a certain spot in the shade of a tall grove which overlooks the river. The view is very lovely. I have often been there before, but it seems to me I never admired the landscape as I did yesterday. The Loire broadens out at this point, and flows through the center of a verdant amphitheater between the heights of Saint-Florent on the left and the town of Varades on the right bank. The scene is very beautiful, and is admired even by those who have visited the most famous places. "There speaks the woman of Anjou," I can hear you say. Quite true, and I suppose a certain amount of love of my native soil was mingled with my enthusiasm, but that sentiment is certainly in the designs of Providence.

And then what memories are associated with the Loire just here! It was here that the Vendéans crossed in 1793, that vast throng hounded by a pitiless foe, fleeing from their burning homes and devastated fields to wander without food or shelter. These poor people pressed onward in all haste to cross the river, not knowing what awaited them on the other side. My grandparents and yours, too, my dear Louise, were there, and many of our relatives and friends lived through very sorrowful hours at this place. What bitter and yet what glorious memories!

These and other thoughts occupied my mind as I sat and admired the scene for a long time. I had only read a little in my books when I suddenly realized to my amazement that it was near night-fall, and that I ought to have been at Mesnil again that very minute. As it was, it would be half an hour before I would be ready to start, and a good hour at least before I reached home. I hurried back to the "Silver Springs," and urged the stable-boys to make

haste with my rig, but the horse had not yet had his oats, and that meant more delay. What a state Aunt Dumoulin would be in!

At last I was fairly off, though not at a very fast rate, for it was already dark night. In my anxiety to reach home as soon as possible I unfortunately undertook to try a short cut with which I was only acquainted by hearsay, and which shortened the road so effectually that I completely lost my way, and there I was at nine o'clock at night without an idea as to which way to turn. To make matters worse the night was so dark that I could not see an inch beyond the little circle of light made by the carriage lantern.

What should I have done if poor Adèle had been with me! She is so scarey she would have screamed like a peacock, and that would have made me lose my head altogether!

Well, I kept on and on, and I became more and more at sea. Fanfan stopped every now and then, and tried to turn back, and when I made him feel the bit to bring him back to obedience, he tossed his graceful head as if to say, "What is my mistress thinking of? She is crazy certainly! We will never get home by this road!"

The uneasiness of my horse should have warned me that I was taking the wrong direction, but I never even suspected it and pushed on in the same course. At last, not recognizing any land-marks, I bethought me to invoke my Guardian Angel, and soon afterwards I saw a little light, towards which I made my way. Happily I had come upon a hamlet of three or four houses. I knocked at the first door, and explained my predicament, and very soon I was put on the right road. Just fancy, my dear, for an hour I had been driving in just the opposite direction from Mesnil. I turned around at once, and Fanfan, flattered perhaps at being vindicated, set himself to make up for lost time. It was five minutes after eleven when I reached the house. My aunt was worried to death, Fanfan was worn out, though he had the delicacy to say nothing about it, and I

myself was faint with hunger. But except for the fact of my having distressed my aunt, I was delighted with my day's outing. I had taken the precaution to carry with me plenty of wraps and shawls so that I had not been a bit cold. In short, the excursion did me much good, and I intend to repeat it from time to time in order to obey the Faculty.

[*To Father N——.*]

MESNIL, November 1, 1855.

Reverend Father:—

I make haste to tell you of a very special favor which I have received lately. You know that about two months ago I made a great sacrifice in rejecting the proposals of the Saint-Julien family. I laid bare my heart to you at that time, and you will remember that though I conquered in the end, it was not until after a hard struggle against the wishes and representations of those I love, and especially against the inclinations of my own heart. The first result of this victory was inward peace, and yet this peace of mind did not exclude much suffering and many regrets. I was resigned to the will of God, but my act of renunciation was not really generous and enthusiastic. I dwelt often upon the loss of my happiness in this world, and I had almost a sense of injury that God had not seen fit to make His Will conform to my desires. I even went so far as to regret—though I strove to banish such unworthy thoughts—nevertheless I did, in spite of myself, regret that in place of becoming Comtesse de Saint-Julien I must remain the plain little country-girl that I was. I thought with bitterness of the immense fortune I would have had at my disposal with which to help the poor and unfortunate, and also, I am ashamed to say, of the advantages and enjoyments of every sort which wealth brings in its train, of fine horses and carriages, fine friends, plenty of servants, costly clothes and ornaments, and so on. Yet before I had never wished for this sort of foolishness! Yes, Father, I was such a wretch as to harbor regrets of this kind, and

even, sometimes, I went so far as to dwell with complacency upon certain recollections which could only tend to encourage and strengthen my vanity.

I tell you all this with shame and self-contempt, but it will help you to appreciate that, although now I am different, the change is due to the goodness of God and not to any merit of mine. On the contrary, such unworthy feelings and such miserable attachment to the vanities of this world should by right have deprived me of favors which Our Lord usually reserves for courageous and generous souls.

Now, in the last few days, Father, He has enabled me to see these things in quite a different light. Not only do I remain fixed in my resolution, but I now feel that were God to will that I become Comtesse de Saint-Julien, I would have to do myself violence in order to make my will conform to His.

I know that at the least sign from me Madame de Saint-Julien and her son would come immediately to Mesnil, and that it would give them great joy and happiness to hear that I had receded from my decision, but even if I were relieved of all responsibility by my brother's death, even if an angel from heaven were to come and tell me that his soul would be saved, I would still adhere to my resolution, for now the love of Jesus Christ crucified draws my heart with such force of attraction that it is impossible for me to love or desire anything outside of Him, and I know that were Our Lord to give me my liberty, I would only use it to bind myself to Him by closer and irrevocable ties. What a great grace Our Lord has granted me in thus appealing to His crucified love! Thank Him for me in the Holy Sacrifice, for I cannot thank Him except by loving Him more and more. You see, Father, upon what an imperfect and vain creature God has showered His favors. Explain it to me, for it is beyond my comprehension.

MARGUERITE LECLÈRE.

[Fragments from the Journal.]

November 15, 1860.

O my God, what torments I am undergoing on Paul's account! The wretched boy has abandoned and betrayed his Maker. For a long time I would not believe it, but now I know he leads a wicked life, and is in a state of mortal sin. Whether he has yet lost his faith I do not know. O dear Lord, how I am suffering! Beloved Master, what is it that I must still add to my sacrifice? Thou knowest, O Lord, that my tears flow day and night for this dear sinner and that I have mingled my tears with my blood. Thou knowest that I am ready to die a thousand deaths to bring him back from sin!

December 1, 1861.

What has become of Paul? For three months he has not answered one of my letters. In Paris no one knows anything about him. Who will give me back my child? Is he sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of sin? Or is he dead and already condemned by the justice of God? O this terrible uncertainty! Mary, Mother of Sinners, have pity on him and on me! I am ready for anything! Ask Our Lord not to spare me!

[To Paul.]

THE HUTTERIE, December 10, 1861.

I write once more to the general delivery, because I do not know where you are. You have succeeded in hiding yourself from my affection! Do you get my letters? Do you read them? O unhappy boy, if your heart is not steeled against all sense of pity, think of the awful suffering your poor sister is undergoing, and how one word, one line from you would relieve this agony of anxiety! What could I have done for you that I have not done? O Paul, if you could only know the martyrdom I am going through, you would not be deaf to my appeals. If your dog were to come to you bleeding and wounded to seek your help, you would pay attention to him—but me you do not heed!

[*To Charles.*]

PARIS, December 24, 1861

I have found Paul, and have just telegraphed to relieve your anxiety. As I was coming out of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, he passed by me in a carriage. I ran after him, and he stopped, and took me in with him. Poor boy! If you could see the state of weakness and exhaustion in which I found him! I took him to the Rue du Bac, and put him straight to bed. The doctor says he has typhoid fever.

For two hours the poor boy has been out of his head, and he does not know me. I am going to fetch a priest, and I will be on the look-out for the first ray of consciousness.

He is seriously ill, and he may not be left to me for long, and yet in spite of his dangerous condition my heart is full of joy. Before I found him, I dreaded the worst. I kept thinking he might be already dead and numbered with the reprobate whom God no longer knows, but now that I have him with me once more, very ill, it is true, but still alive, it seems to me as though the battle were won. I say to myself that God helped me to find him in a way that was almost miraculous, because He will have mercy on his soul.

No! No! He will not strike him now, while he is in my arms, clasped to my heart! My prayers will be a shield to turn aside the divine wrath. He has given him back to me. He will not tear him away again. O God, if Thy justice demands a heavy chastisement, my body, my soul, my affections are ready! Strike the mother but spare the child!

Good-bye, dear Charles. I do not know what I am doing or saying. I am wild with joy. Pray for us.

Your sister,

MARGUERITE.

[*Fragments from the Journal.*]

March 14, 1862.

Paul has completely recovered, but, O my God, who will

heal his soul? I thank Thee, but my gratitude is nothing to that which I will have when Thou givest me back his soul. It is only his body I have saved from death, and I cannot really rejoice, and I will cry to Thee, O Lord, so long as Thou dost not hear me. I must have

May 8, 1862.

Why, O dearest Mother, have fears and unrest succeeded to the deep peace which I experienced at Lourdes during that week? You overwhelmed me with consolations, and I came back full of strength and courage to bear my cross, and now, hardly have I returned when the shadows spread over my soul. I walk in utter darkness. I grope for you, and call upon you, and cry to you, but you do not answer. The waters of tribulation have gone over me. All the powers of hell are leagued against me, and all my friends in heaven and on earth seem to have abandoned me. I feel—and this is the worst affliction of all—as if all that I had done and suffered for my brother's soul were of no value in God's eyes, as if this soul were God's enemy, lost forever. I cannot control my mind any longer. Even my will seems to escape my government so that I do not know whether I will or will not. O Mother, hold out your hand to me!

The thought brings with it no sensible consolation, but still I do not forget that it is by suffering, humiliation and annihilation of all the natural powers that God completes His work and that strength is made perfect in weakness. I know that this trial will only endure for a season and that light will return. But Oh, the difference between knowing and feeling!

[*To Mademoiselle de la Croix.*]

[Marguerite's devoted friend had been obliged to leave her for a day or two.]

THE HUTTERIE, May 10, 1862.

My dearest Friend:—

You know what a storm I have been passing through of late. A note from Father N——, which came yesterday,

has comforted me a little. He writes, "I have read in an ancient author whose name has escaped me that bird-fanciers sometimes put out the eyes of nightingales and that they then sing more sweetly in captivity than when they were free. This reminds me of your case, my child. True, the Good Lord does not deprive you of sight, but he allows the enemy to plunge you in this thick darkness and to overwhelm you with anguish, because your faithfulness in the midst of trials gives him more glory and you more merit than a life passed in peace and joy. Your present afflictions are the measure of the reward to come."

By God's grace these few lines have given me strength and courage again. Last night I tried to embody this idea in verse. I had plenty of time for it. As you know I sleep very little, and I keep you from sleeping, too, poor dear! I send you my attempt with these few lines.

LE ROSSIGNOL.¹

Moi.

Mon Dieu, j'ai tout perdu; force, santé jeunesse
Ma vie est condamnée au plus ingrat labeur!
Qui donc pourrait chanter, à l'heure ou la tristesse
Livre l'âme éperdue aux coups de la douleur?

Mon bon Auge.

Enfant, console-toi. Dans son étroite cage
Le rossignol captif, qu'aveugla l'oiseleur,
A des hymnes plus beaux, un plus divine ramage,
Que lorsque au doux printemps il disait son bonheur.

Il chante la forêt et la verte clairière,
Et la reine des nuits, qui monte au firmament,
Le frais tapis de mousse ou tremble la lumière,
Tombant les soirs d'été de son voile d'argent.

Du petit prisonnier la voix tendre et plaintive
Se prolonge d'abord en doux gémissements;
Puis navré d'un amour que sa blessure avive,
Il éclate soudain en sonores accents.

¹ See Appendix for translation.

Enivré d'harmonie, épuisé par son rêve
Dans l'étroite prison qui sera son tombeau,
Il chante, il chante encor, sans repos et sans trêve,
Et ce chant qui le tue est son chant le plus beau.

C'est le chant de l'amour, chant qui brise la vie;
Car l'amour est plus fort que le fer et le feu.
Jesus t'en a donné, la généreuse envie:
Chante jusqu'à la mort, rossignol du bon Dieu!

(Fragment from the Journal.)

May 20.

My Jesus, at Thy word the tempest is calmed. A flood of peace inundates my soul. I am pained at the very excess of Thy loving-kindness, for I see how powerless I am to love Thee as I wish to love Thee. Come and take me! Come quickly, Lord, for I can no longer live without Thee!

.

EPILOGUE.

The reader can well understand with what emotions of gratitude, shame and sorrow I read these pages in which my dear sister revealed herself to me without reserve. I had beforehand a high conception of her virtues, but I never suspected that the love of God had lifted this generous soul to such a sublime degree of self-abnegation and heroism. And it was for me, to save me that she had borne, and even asked for the bitter trials—for me that she had ruined health and strength, broken her heart, sacrificed life itself!

I spent those two days praying and weeping near my dear Marguerite. I invoked her as a saint, so confident was I that she already enjoyed the happiness of the elect, and I asked her to crown her work by helping me to keep steadily onward in the path that leads to heaven.

And now the time had come when I must part with her mortal remains, and consign them once more to the earth, where they will rest until the resurrection of the dead. Tuesday, the thirteenth of May, was the day set for the funeral. Early in the morning the Children of Mary, dressed in white, came to bear the body to the church and to the cemetery. They had asked permission to perform this

office themselves. The funeral train was followed by an immense concourse of people from Angers and over fifty parishes in the vicinity. All present vied with each other in praising the merits and virtues of the holy soul who had just departed this life. It was told, amid thanksgivings to Almighty God for His great mercy, how the sacrifice of the sister had not been in vain and how the brother who had been the cause of her death was already won by her prayers.

After the Mass, which was celebrated by the vicar-general of Angers, the body was borne to the cemetery and laid in the vault where the remains of our parents had been placed. I reserved a space for myself at Marguerite's feet. There I shall sleep when my time comes, so that on the day of resurrection the penitent sinner may present himself before the judgment seat of God under the protection of the innocent soul who paid his ransom.

.

Here my story ends, and yet I have only set down the events of my life up to my twenty-first year. Perhaps some day I may write of what befell me later. In the forty years that have passed since my sister's death, I have experienced many trials and much consolation. Joy and grief, anxiety and peace have succeeded one another; such is man's life here below! But I lack the time now to tell of how Charles and Lucie, utterly ruined by a great financial disaster, died while still young, and left me nine

orphans to support and educate. At this time I was but twenty-seven years old. At first we had a hard struggle for existence, but in the end the Good Lord came to my aid, and gave me the means to accomplish my task. I was able to give the children a good education, and, thank God, they profited by it, and are to-day a credit to their name.

As for me, I am alone now at the Hutterie in the little family homestead. I have become in all respects a farmer. I myself lead forth my beasts to labor, "My great white oxen marked with red," and sow the seed in the soil where I shall soon rest.

I take leave of my readers, asking pardon for having detained them so long over my reminiscences. The work has been a solace in my later years. "I love to find once more, under the ashes of old age, the living fire of memory."

THE END.

POPPIES.¹

Rochejaquelin, the hero of Vendée,
M'sieur Henri, "the intrepid," as they say,
In his hat, round his neck, on his sabre did display
Three red kerchiefs of Cholet.

His eyes were blue, his soul shone in them telling every
mood.

His brow was fair, his hair of gold, his age but twenty
years.

He was tender as a woman, gentle, too, and good,
Like the Compéador he knew no fears.

When he drew his sword, ah! then began the dance.
"For God, His Priests and His King!" was our cry.
He said to his men, "Follow me if I advance;
Kill me, if you see me fly!"

The boys they all followed this cock with scarlet crest.
Where he led, there might his men be sought;
For d'Elbée and Lescure, Stofflet and Charette,
All said Duguesclin to him was naught.

.
The Blues grew weary fighting these invincible "Brigands,"
Led by a mere child, and they shouted in dismay,
"Aim only at the chief: you may see him where he stands,
With his three red kerchiefs of Cholet."

Soon, like bees whose honey was the blood
Of brave M'sieur Henri, so young and so gay,
The bullets flew thick around him as he stood,
The very foremost in the fray.

¹ See page 193.

"They aim at you alone! Take off the kerchiefs red!"
Cried the men of Vendée, "Ho, there! M'sieur Henri!
At least hide the one that you wear on your head,
Or a dead man you will be!"

But the young man only laughed: "What would you have
me do?
Shall I strike my colors? Never! Hide my rank? Not I!
'Tis an honor to be a target for the foe.
Avenge me, boys, if I die!"

These brave farmer soldiers, heroes all in disguise,
Now adopt a plan of skillful strategy.
Every mother's son himself Death defies
To save M'sieur Henri.

As they stood under fire every man of them drew
From his leather haversack, his linen breeches, or his vest,
A red kerchief of Cholet, and in a flash he too
Displayed his captain's crest!

The Blues, all amazed so suddenly to meet
In every foe a captain, the bright badge upon his head,
Now searched in vain for the ear of golden wheat
In this field of poppies red!

THE NIGHTINGALE.¹*Myself.*

Now that my life, deflowered of all its wealth,
Is passed in thankless labor, and for me
All joy is turned to grief, youth, strength and health
All fled, how shall my song arise to Thee?

My Good Angel.

Courage, poor soul, the captive nightingale
Being blinded by the fowler still does sing.
Sweeter his note than when in wood and dale
He trilled his joyous greeting to the spring.

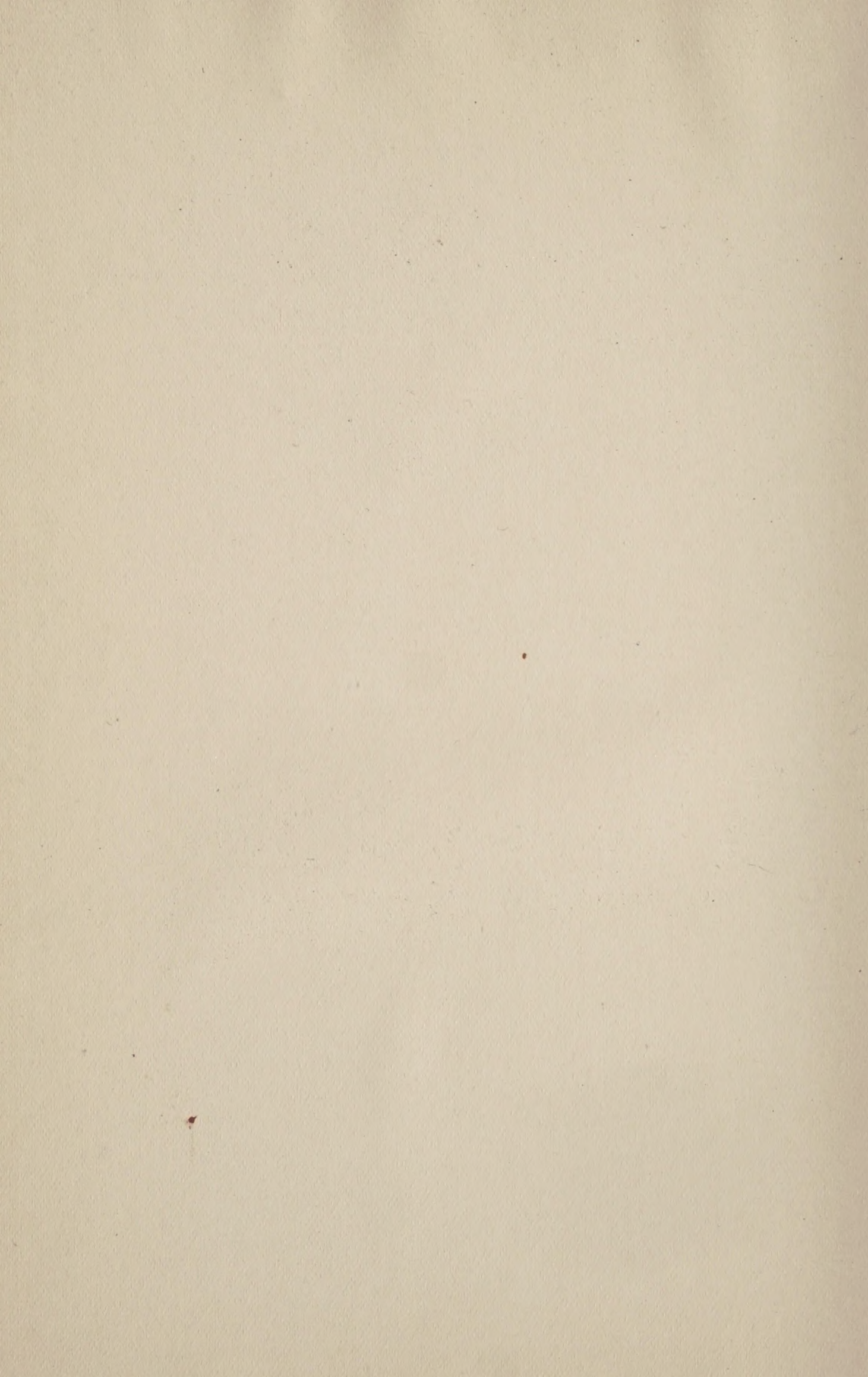
He sings the forest glade, the queen of night
As calm and radiant she mounts the sky,
The mossy bank where shimmering beams of light
Shed from her silver veil all lustrous lie.

The tiny captive's tender plaintive voice
At first is heard in low and mournful sounds,
Then loud and clear does suddenly rejoice.
His love is but made stronger by his wounds.

The wonders of his dream he ceaseless sings
In the close prison soon his grave to be,
And this last song with a rare music rings
Which never graced his notes when he was free.

This is love's hymn which soon must quench life's fire,
For love is lord of all, stronger than death.
The love of Jesus does thy song inspire,
God's nightingale sing on 'til thy last breath.

¹ See page 374.



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